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General Assembly

Sixtieth session

Official Records

14th plenary meeting
Monday, 19 September 2005, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Malawi.

Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mutharika: I wish at the outset to congratulate you on your election as President of the sixtieth session of the United Nations General Assembly and also for the excellent manner in which you and your Bureau are steering the work of this session. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support. I further commend His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, our Secretary-General, for the dynamic and sterling leadership of the United Nations.

The theme of this session is germane to the proposals for reform of the Organization. There is the imperative of taking stock of its strengths and weaknesses so that we can create a better future. Within the context of this theme, the Secretary-General, through his report entitled "In larger freedom", has made important proposals that will make the United Nations more effective and credible. The proposals aim at enabling the United Nations to provide the required leadership in the implementation of the global development agenda and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

My country, Malawi, has followed closely the debate on the report. I feel that, from the diverse opinions that have been expressed, a consensus is emerging on the need to implement United Nations reforms and make the Organization respond more effectively to the challenge of change.

Let me, however, express the view that, in addition to the reform of the Security Council, there are other equally important reforms of the United Nations that are critical to the realization of the global development agenda. I will turn to these later. For the moment, it is critical that we remain focused so that all elements of the reform receive our undivided attention.

Mr. President, let me assure you that Malawi appreciates the role played by the international community and the United Nations in the efforts to eradicate poverty and promote development and prosperity for all. The just-ended High-level Plenary Meeting is one such initiative that offers great hopes for the way forward. However, previous experience has taught us that a lot is generally said and promised within the United Nations, but little or nothing is delivered. It is my earnest hope that the outcome of this session will not turn out to be another talk show.

Malawi faces serious problems in instituting an effective system of political and economic governance.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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My country continues to face critical challenges in determining our political agenda, which in turn affect our development efforts. We still face extreme poverty, food shortages, hunger and malnutrition. HIV/AIDS continues to claim more lives. Malaria is still killing millions each year.

Over and above these problems, we face mounting domestic and external debt, an unfair and inequitable global trading system and the prevalence of conflicts and political instability. We therefore feel that for any United Nations reforms to be meaningful, we need assistance in the areas of good governance.

In Malawi, we are promoting good governance by pursuing sound macro-economic policies, reduction in public expenditure, bench-marking the activities and performance of the civil service and fighting corruption at all levels. We have also instituted effective reforms of the private sector, and through dialogue the business community is now responding positively to economic and social reforms. In many of these reforms, I can say that we have made a good beginning.

It is for this reason that my Government welcomed the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) of the African Union. Our accession to the African Peer Review Mechanism is a manifestation of our desire to adopt policies and practices that emphasize accountability and transparency in public sector management.

Malawi has made efforts to implement the Millennium Development Goals. Our report, entitled "Malawi and the Millennium Development Goals: challenges and achievements", has been circulated. However, my country is facing severe constraints in implementing the MDGs because we are allocating a significant amount of limited resources to servicing external debt and for managing the HIV/AIDS pandemic, at the cost of the social and economic transformation necessary to fight poverty.

Malawi, therefore, supports the proposal to find comprehensive and durable solutions to the external debt problem. In this regard, we welcome the recent proposal by the G-8 to cancel 100 per cent of outstanding debt owed by 18 countries, including 14 from Africa. I would like to appeal to all creditors to follow this noble example, because debt cancellation has the potential to assist the poor countries in achieving the MDGs and, hence, attaining national economic recovery and economic transformation.

Another challenge for Malawi is that my country finds it hard to be integrated into the global trading system, partly due to the lack of products that meet high quality standards, but also due to an unfair and inequitable global trading system. We therefore join the appeal for the speedy completion of the World Trade Organization Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations in order to assist poor countries, such as Malawi, to benefit from global trade. Furthermore, there is need to provide immediate duty-free and quota-free market access for all exports from the least developed countries, including the elimination of all non-tariff barriers, such as trade distorting subsidies and domestic support, especially in agriculture, by developed countries.

In the African perspective, development efforts have also been heavily undermined by the prevalence of conflicts and political instability in many parts of the continent. Realizing this, we in Africa have taken bold and far-reaching initiatives to promote peace and security on the continent. For instance, my own country, Malawi, has participated in peacekeeping activities in Liberia, the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I commend the role played by the United Nations Security Council and the G-8 in supporting the African Union's initiatives in conflict resolution and management. I also wish to draw the attention of this Assembly to the fact that peacekeeping in Africa constitutes the bulk of the Security Council's work. I therefore earnestly believe that the role of the United Nations in Africa can be enhanced by encouraging Africa's representation in the Security Council. In that regard, Africa's call for the expansion of the Security Council should be supported by the international community.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic poses serious social and economic challenges to Africa. However, the General Assembly may be interested to know that Malawi is one of the few success stories in managing the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The people of Malawi have welcomed the provision of voluntary counselling and of free anti-retroviral drugs. For instance, since the middle of last year, we have established more than 30 anti-retroviral clinics throughout the country and have treated many people. We expect that by this time next

year, we will have been able to treat more than 80,000 people.

I therefore welcome the call at the High-level Plenary Meeting to provide, as a priority, assistance for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment in African countries on a grant basis. I also welcome the emphasis placed on the need to encourage pharmaceutical companies to make anti-retroviral drugs affordable and accessible in Africa. My Government appeals for more funding to enable us to adopt a holistic approach that takes into account the medical, economic, political and social impacts of HIV/AIDS on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

I take this opportunity to commend all countries that continue to make contributions to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The Fund has enabled Malawi to introduce free anti-retroviral treatment programme for those infected by HIV/AIDS.

In terms of agriculture and food security, Malawi has not fared well this year. My country is facing severe food shortages owing to the drought that we have had since January this year. As a result of a very poor harvest, we shall require approximately 270,000 metric tons to feed some 4.2 million people who will be in need of food until the next harvest season, sometime in April or May next year. I therefore appeal to the world community to help us to obtain more food sources for our people.

I am grateful for the pledges of relief food assistance made by our cooperating partners such as the World Food Programme, the British Government, the European Union, the Japanese Government, the United States Government, the Belgian Government and the Norwegian Government. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for the special appeal he has made for Southern Africa.

I am pleased to announce that the people of Malawi are also doing something to feed themselves. We have made provision in our budget to buy food for our people. We have also established a Feed-the-Nation Fund, through which people in Malawi from all walks of life are making voluntary donations to purchase food for the poorest of the poor. The response has been overwhelming.

With a view to a medium- to long-term solution, we have adopted concrete policies aimed at reducing our dependence on rain-fed agriculture. We have established a full ministry responsible for water development and irrigation. We look forward to technical assistance from those countries that have expertise in the area of irrigation.

Turning to the subject of United Nations reform, I wish to bring to the attention of the General Assembly an important aspect of reform of the Organization, concerning the determination of eligibility for United Nations membership. As members are aware, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees the right of all the world's peoples to belong to the United Nations and that no country should be denied membership in the Organization. Malawi believes that the United Nations was founded on the principle of inclusivity in its membership.

That is why we in Malawi call for the admission of the Republic of China (Taiwan) as a Member of the United Nations. That request is made on the premise that, following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, the new States that emerged therefrom expressed their desire to become sovereign and independent Members of the United Nations. They were granted membership. That was a political decision. In the same way, when the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia broke up into the separate States of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro and Slovenia, each State was admitted into the United Nations. That also was a political decision. Czechoslovakia broke up into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and each of those States was admitted into the United Nations. In South-East Asia, Singapore pulled out of the Federation of Malaya and became a Member of the United Nations. Later, East Timor broke away from Indonesia and was also admitted as a Member. Those were political decisions.

The Government of Malawi is therefore puzzled that the Republic of China (Taiwan), which took a similar political decision, is denied membership in the United Nations. How can the United Nations stand for equity and justice when it is denying membership to more than 23 million people who contribute significantly to global trade and development? How can the United Nations justify its denial of membership to Taiwan when, in fact, the countries listed above were admitted? Why is Taiwan being discriminated against in the United Nations?

Unless those questions are honestly answered, observers will conclude that the United Nations is applying a double standard. The Government of Malawi believes that the United Nations should use the same standard to grant membership to the Republic of China. I therefore appeal to the United Nations, through you, Mr. President, to extend membership to the Taiwanese people in the same way as it has done for countries of Eastern Europe and South-East Asia. That would enable the dynamic and resourceful people of Taiwan to play their rightful role in global affairs, industrialization, trade and development. I believe that the admission of the Republic of China (Taiwan) into the United Nations would also bring credibility to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Long live the United Nations!

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Malawi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Gambia.

Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Jammeh: Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I have no doubt that, with your skills and vast experience, you will guide our deliberations to a successful conclusion. Let me also commend my dear friend His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, the outgoing President of the General Assembly, for the excellent manner in which he directed the affairs of the fifty-ninth session. In addition, I commend the Secretary-General for his leadership, especially in advancing the United Nations reform and revitalization agenda. My country has full confidence in his integrity and competence, which he has demonstrated over the years, both as a staff member and at the helm of the Organization.

As we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the Organization, we must pause and take stock of the record of our collective response to the many different global challenges that mankind has had to face. From a membership of only 50 States at its inception, the Organization has grown to 191 Members today. That rapid expansion, together with the sophistication that the United Nations has acquired over the years, calls for an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses with a view to making it more effective. It is no secret that the voice of the General Assembly has grown weaker over the years, that the credibility of our human rights procedures and mechanisms has been reduced, that democracy, accountability and transparency in the Security Council have become blurred and that the Economic and Social Council needs to be more relevant and effective.

On several occasions since 1945, we have witnessed instances of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Civil strife and terrorism are undermining human and State security. Poverty, hunger and diseases still decimate countless communities, while our capacity to respond to humanitarian crises needs to be reassessed and revitalized.

This is the backdrop of the challenges we as an organization face. They do not represent failure; they simply underscore that more needs to be done to make the world a safer and better place for all of mankind.

Therefore, as we celebrate our achievements, let us rededicate ourselves to remaining true to our mission and also fashion a new vision that captures the realities of our world in the twenty-first century. In this connection, my delegation would like to express its gratitude to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive reform agenda he has laid out in his report "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2005). We agree that the world needs to be steered towards a greater focus on those larger freedoms.

The majority of the world's people today are in chains — the chains of poverty and underdevelopment.

For them, development means freedom from want, freedom from fear and hunger and, above all, freedom to live in dignity. Reforming the United Nations so that it is better poised to more effectively address humankind's quest for these larger freedoms, is a real necessity for the greater relevance and impact of our Organization.

Indeed, the following objectives should be our collective focus for the next decade: absolute poverty and its attendant woes such as diseases, hunger and illiteracy must be eliminated from the face of the earth; the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction must be halted and a total ban on nuclear weapons should be imposed on all States; peace must be allowed to reign throughout the world; there must be greater tolerance and mutual respect in dealing with each other's differences; the world's ecosystems and natural resources must be judiciously conserved and utilized; political systems must work to achieve greater cooperation; multilateralism should replace unilateralism in dealing with conflicts, disputes or disagreements between Member States, and reconciliation should replace confrontation and conflict.

If, in the next decade, we succeed in achieving those objectives, we will have provided for ourselves those larger freedoms that we crave today.

While we must focus on those long-term objectives, we must also not lose sight of the imperatives of our time. We must continue working in concert towards the realization of global peace, assigning highest priority to those conflict situations that pose the greatest threat to the peace of the whole world. In this, we must begin with the Middle East. Without a just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict peace will continue to elude the Middle East with consequences that will affect the whole world. My delegation supports the vision of a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. We also welcome Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and the West Bank as a step towards a complete withdrawal from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory.

The unstable situation in Iraq is causing undesirable ripples all over the world. The situation is, by no means, unconnected with the soaring price of oil, which is causing serious problems in the global economy and threatening the economic gains made by many developing countries. The sooner stability is brought to the region, the better it will be for that country and the rest of the world.

We are encouraged by the positive contributions of the United Nations and the African Union towards the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Africa.

In Guinea-Bissau, another milestone has been reached with the election of President Nino Vieira. After many years of trials and tribulation, the people of Guinea-Bissau have finally placed the country on a solid path to recovery, peace and development. As Chair of the Friends of Guinea-Bissau at the United Nations, as well as a member of the Ad hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau, my delegation calls for an early convening of a donors conference to show solidarity with the people of Guinea-Bissau and a commitment to lasting peace in that country.

Equally in Burundi, the democratic transition has been completed with the recent election of President Pierre Nkurunziza. We extend to him and the people of Burundi, our heartiest congratulations and best wishes for a new era of peace, stability and development.

This year has witnessed major strides towards sustainable peace in the Sudan. My delegation commends the Government of the Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement for their commitment to that historic accord meant to bring lasting peace to the country. We are encouraged by the steps they have taken so far to implement the accord, and it is my fervent hope that their collective leadership will continue tirelessly to pursue the Sudan of their dreams. We sympathize with all the Sudanese people on the tragic death of their leader and Vice-President, Mr. John Garang, who did so much to advance the peace process. We are confident that his successor will continue in his footsteps until all the pending issues are peacefully resolved.

An underlying factor in all of these conflicts is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We must commit ourselves to denying non-State actors, terrorists and organized criminal networks the acquisition of these weapons of mass terror. We shall have an opportunity to further refine our response to this scourge during the 2006 review of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms.

Our Organization must be the ultimate defender of the rule of international law, to which all States in the comity of nations must adhere. Any attempt to

weaken or undermine our rules-based international system should be rejected without compromise. An institution like the International Criminal Court, with a mandate to end impunity, deserves all the support it can garner from the international community. The Rome Statute is a beacon of hope to all of humanity, and my delegation appeals to those States that have not yet done so, to consider speedily becoming party to it.

My delegation strongly condemns the application of unilateral coercive measures as a means of settling disputes. These measures have an adverse impact on the lives of innocent people, who lack any means of recourse or redress. We therefore call for the complete and immediate lifting of the sanctions imposed on Cuba.

As we clamour for reform and renewal of our Organization, we should widen our horizons and undertake a sober and dispassionate reassessment of our policy towards the Republic of Taiwan. The concerns of the 23 million hard-working and peace-loving people of that great country continue to be ignored. The Republic of Taiwan is a democratic, sovereign State. Its democratically elected Government defends the interests of the people of Taiwan in the world. The Taiwanese people display the same concern we all do about global problems such as international peace and security, HIV/AIDS, the spread of disease, environmental pollution, and all the other issues that engage us at the United Nations. Yet, they are not here at the table with us, contributing their share in the search for solutions to the problems that confront humankind today. We therefore call on all the peace-loving nations of the world to support the participation of the Republic of Taiwan in all the affairs of the United Nations as a full Member without delay. The twenty-first-century United Nations should include all people the world over without political discrimination. The United Nations should also be committed to that goal: a twenty-first-century, reformed United Nations that includes the people of the Republic of Taiwan. Their plight is more sharply amplified by our present preoccupation with the conflicts raging today that pose a serious threat to international peace and security.

The reform agenda has been with us for decades now. Finally, this year, a number of reports, including one by the Secretary-General himself, seem to have spurred all of us to action.

My delegation fully supports the proposed reform of the Economic and Social Council and endorses the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission. In that regard, we hope that the wealth of experience which the United Nations has gathered over the years, especially in dealing with countries emerging from conflict, will be brought to bear in elaborating the structure, functions and mandate of the Commission.

We equally support the proposed reform of the Commission on Human Rights. However, we should remember that human rights are everyone's concern and their enforcement is not the prerogative of a select few. A smaller human rights body would reinforce that notion and entrench the credibility crisis that the current Commission suffers from. While the Commission may have structural deficiencies, it is its working methods that we must focus on in order to eliminate bias, subjectivity and selectivity.

Revitalizing the General Assembly is equally long overdue. It is time for the Assembly to be more assertive within the mandate accorded it by the Charter.

The reform of our Organization would be incomplete without Security Council reform. The current size and composition of the Council makes a mockery of the larger membership of the United Nations and the realities of the world today. No amount of politics or procrastination can silence Africa's legitimate quest for full representation on the Security Council. International peace and security are everyone's business. Without reform and a thorough review of the Council's working methods, the legitimacy of the decisions it takes will be increasingly questionable.

We shall also have to look into the issue of the veto once again. The purpose for which the veto was instituted and the grounds on which it was assigned 60 years ago are no longer valid in today's world. In fact, Africa's position on the veto, which my delegation wholeheartedly supports, is that it should be abolished. In fact, veto power should be given only to the General Assembly, to be exercised by a majority vote. If that is done, the United Nations and the world will be able to boast of a universal democratic system that will usher in a new and more peaceful world order.

The Security Council as presently constituted is not conducive to the maintenance of world peace and security. If it cannot be reformed, it should be abolished and its mandate assigned to the General Assembly with decisions taken by a majority vote. In that event, any action taken by the United Nations in a

given situation would be taken on behalf of all of us. That would put a definitive end to unilateralism in resolving international disputes and issues.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Gambia for the statement he has just made.

Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Interim President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Alexandre (*spoke in French*): At the very outset of my remarks, both on my own behalf and on behalf of the Haitian nation, I would like to express our sincerest congratulations to you, Sir, on your unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at the sixtieth session. Your wealth of experience in matters of security, human rights and development augur well for the success of our discussions.

I would also like to pay tribute to Jean Ping, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon, whose moderation, sense of compromise and restraint won him universal respect and esteem during the previous session.

May I also express my sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts in the cause of peace, democracy and development. That triad — peace, democracy and development — is now the new name for progress made by peoples and for stability in the world.

It is in that context that, for more than a year now, the Organization has deployed the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which is helping to improve the security climate in the country. We requested the Mission because of our firm belief in international solidarity. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those countries that have displayed their friendship to Haiti by contributing in one way or another to the deployment of MINUSTAH.

From this rostrum, I would like to express my sincerest sympathy for the afflicted populations of the southern part of the United States of America that have been so tragically affected by the passage of Hurricane Katrina in August, one of the most devastating hurricanes ever to strike our continent. We would like once again to express to the Government and people of the United States our deepest compassion and our profound solidarity in these trying times.

Our Organization is now 60 years old. The celebration of that anniversary will be a splendid extension of the High-level Plenary Meeting of heads of State or Government, which was intended as an initial stocktaking of the implementation of the commitments undertaken in the Millennium Declaration.

The Government of Haiti supports the spirit of the text adopted on 16 September, which broadly reviews the minimum objectives that the international community intends to achieve by 2015. Likewise, the Republic of Haiti supports all steps taken to increase development assistance through the use of funds of solidarity at the international level.

The Government of Haiti attaches the greatest importance to the proposal of the French Republic to create stable and lasting financing through innovative mechanisms in order to prevent and cure the major pandemics of our time. I am pleased to note that many of the world's leaders have received that proposal with the greatest interest.

We also welcome various other initiatives, including the United Kingdom proposal for an International Financial Facility, which arranges for borrowing on the financial markets to increase assistance to the poorest countries, in particular for the fight against HIV/AIDS. It deserves our consideration.

However, those efforts may not achieve their objectives if a comprehensive solution to the debt problem of the countries of the South is not found. It would be a positive contribution to international security to solve the debt problem by cancelling the

debts of the least developed countries and helping those countries overcome their financial difficulties by assisting their development. The Republic of Haiti unreservedly supports all negotiated, effective, comprehensive and lasting initiatives of the United Nations aimed at solving the distressing debt problem of the peoples of the poor countries.

On the sixtieth anniversary of our Organization, we should heed the many calls for the reform of the United Nations. Certainly, significant progress is being made, in particular the proposal to transform the Commission on Human Rights into a Human Rights Council. Chapter XIII of the Charter should be removed, along with the references to trusteeship contained in Chapter XII.

With respect to the Security Council, the Republic of Haiti supports paragraph 153 of the outcome document, which proposes the early reform of the Security Council in order to make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and thus to further enhance the Council's effectiveness and the legitimacy degree of implementation of its decisions.

In that regard, I reaffirm the position of Haiti, as expressed by Prime Minister Gérard Latortue, in favour of correcting the historical error of not having a representative of the Latin American and Caribbean region among the permanent members of the Security Council.

The Republic of Haiti is at the crossroads. In a few weeks, general elections will be held throughout the country to select the nation's elected representatives at all levels. The elections are thoroughly inclusive. All sectors and all political parties without exception are participating. Admittedly, the road to completing the process has been difficult, marked by the outbreak of violence and feverish moments. Rediscovering freedom is not easy. During long months, the country has lived in a situation bordering on chaos, in which armed bands have held many of the capital's neighbourhoods hostage and committed the worst atrocities. Fortunately, they have been, for the most part, held in check by the combined efforts of the Haitian National Police and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

Calm is gradually returning. I am convinced that the electoral campaign will take place in a peaceful climate, in spite of the large number of presidential candidates. At present, the horizon is brightening perceptibly, despite the desperate acts of ruthless gangs. Also, a national dialogue has been launched involving all relevant sectors of the country. The preparatory committee established for the purpose will shortly issue its report.

In that context, the Government and the people of Haiti are grateful to the United Nations and friendly countries of all continents for their solidarity with Haiti and for their interest in the successful outcome of the present elections. Nothing can now stop the march towards pluralist and democratic elections, to be held in a climate of security ensured by the Haitian National Police, with the support of MINUSTAH.

Haiti's chronic political instability and serious socio-economic problems have compelled a great number of our fellow citizens to migrate to neighbouring shores considered to be more hospitable. However, tensions are now arising among a certain fringe sector of the local population of the host countries. We request the leaders of those countries to deal with that issue urgently in order to stop radicals from taking advantage of the situation and committing abuses against expatriate Haitians. For our part, we are open to all negotiations aimed at restoring calm and finding solutions in accordance with international treaties and rights related to immigration.

At this decisive moment of the transition, we renew our appeal to the international community to visit us to observe the holding of the elections. We want transparent elections in which the candidates elected will not be challenged. We are grateful to the United Nations for the support that it is providing to Haiti during this critical period.

I reiterate the solemn appeal that I made from this rostrum one year ago to the international community not to leave Haiti isolated, so that, on 7 February 2006, I can hand over power to a new, freely elected President, thereby placing Haiti once and for all in the community and comity of democratic nations; so that the Government which emerges from the elections can get down to the challenging task of economic reconstruction and social progress — with, of course, the resolute support and unflagging solidarity of the international community; so that Haiti can emerge from underdevelopment and extreme poverty, which provide fertile ground for all dictatorships; and so that the country can finally recover its unity and its soul.

In that spirit of solidarity and authentic cooperation — which is, after all, the raison d'être of the United Nations — the Republic of Haiti will work to achieve, between now and 2015, the Millennium Development Goals, to which all countries aspire.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Interim President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Item 9 of the provisional agenda (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Maatia Toafa, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Tuvalu

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Tuvalu.

The Honourable Maatia Toafa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Tuvalu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Maatia Toafa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Tuvalu, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Toafa (Tuvalu): The people of Tuvalu, on whose behalf I have the honour to speak, join me in extending our warmest congratulations to the United Nations on the occasion of its sixtieth anniversary.

I wish to put on record our profound gratitude to every single member of this great body for the immense achievements of the United Nations. The Organization's noble values and principles have indeed ensured that even small and isolated nations such as Tuvalu can enjoy the goals of self-determination and statehood with dignity and hope. We are proud to be a member of this great family of Nations.

We also wish to join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency, and to assure you of our full support and cooperation.

Last week the world — our families and our children — heard from us that the time for stating principles and defining problems and actions on the complex challenges of development, security and human rights has long passed. It is now time to take action. But how the rhetoric gets translated into actions to improve standards of living for each nation, and for our families, for women and children in our communities and villages, in an equitable and fair manner, is now the main challenge. The United Nations must play the central role in managing that process.

Tuvalu is greatly encouraged by the prevailing goodwill to fulfil the many international development targets. The commitments made, by the European Union and others, to meet the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance is very welcome. We also welcome new and innovative initiatives on financing and good governance, including the global Democracy Fund, the French initiative and others. The commitment of the United States of America to its Millennium Challenge Account initiative is also very welcome.

As a small island developing State and a least developed country which has consistently taken a prudent and responsible approach to its own national development, Tuvalu is very encouraged, in particular, by the renewed recognition by the international community of the special vulnerabilities of small island developing States, of the needs of least developed countries and of the imperative to address them.

Increased international cooperation to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for small island developing States and the Brussels Programme of Action, particularly with regard to the provision of adequate financing, capacity-building and technology development and transfer, is critical to supporting the poverty reduction and sustainable development efforts of the least developed countries and small island developing States like Tuvalu. There is now a clear need to establish clear vessels of connectivity from international commitments to national strategies, plans and actions on the ground.

In this regard, I am pleased to announce the launch, last Friday here in New York, of Te Kakeega II — Tuvalu's national sustainable development strategies for 2005-2015 — a commitment to action by the

Government and all stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations and island communities.

We sincerely appreciate the support of our friends in New York, bilateral partners and United Nations agencies, and we look forward to working closely with the international community in advancing appropriate partnerships as a result of those strategies. In the same vein, the important role played by regional bodies, especially those in the Pacific region, such as the Council of Regional Organizations for the Pacific, in supporting national efforts ought to be given recognition and support. We therefore strongly support the remarks by Samoa and Papua New Guinea on the importance of regional arrangements, such as the Pacific Plan.

Security challenges continue to create worldwide havoc, fear and uncertainty. Terrorist acts the world over, including the recent bombings in London and elsewhere have proven the continued existence of forces bent on undermining the United Nations founding goals of freedom, peace and security. They have also underscored the urgency with which we, the United Nations, must collectively combat these forces.

Tuvalu is fully committed to joining the fight against international terrorism, as required by Security Council resolutions. But we would need to seek the assistance of the United Nations and the international community to help us fulfil the requirements, particularly on reporting, of these resolutions and of the international anti-terrorism conventions.

The threat of the impact of climate change, sea level rise and variability on the entire global environment continues to be a matter of serious security concern to all. For small island and low-lying coastal countries like Tuvalu the situation is devastating, threatening lives, human rights and our long-term survival. The impacts are real and already happening. They demand urgent actions by the international community. As correctly underscored by the Secretary-General in his report, "In larger freedom", "Without action, [small island developing States] will pay a bitter price for the actions of others" (A/59/2005, para. 60). There cannot be a more true assertion.

While we are all deeply touched by the human loss and destruction suffered from Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast of the United States of America three weeks ago, the world will be better advised to take such timely warnings seriously. Tuvalu strongly believes we must urgently address adaptation and mitigation actions against climate change in line with the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol targets to reduce greenhouse gases and advance the development and use of renewable sources of energy.

On the latter subject, it would be remiss of Tuvalu not to again sincerely acknowledge the coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol early this year and to urge all industrialized countries who have not done so to ratify it as soon as possible. Not to do so will be to sign on Tuvalu's death warrant.

The time is also ripe to initiate dialogue on a more comprehensive approach for future actions against climate change where all major emitters of greenhouse gases will need to participate. The eleventh session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held at Montreal in November, must advance decisions on critical issues on future actions against climate change.

Unless actions are taken seriously, all efforts for development, security and human rights for those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change will be severely compromised. We appeal to those with the capacity to do so to have a heart for islands like Tuvalu, as well as for the rest of mankind.

On enhancing the relevancy and the role of the United Nations, we would like to reiterate our strong support for the reforms for the United Nations, in particular the expansion of the permanent membership and working methods of the Security Council. In this vein we also reiterate our support for the consideration of Japan, Germany, India and Brazil for permanent seats on an expanded Council. We strongly feel that the momentum so far achieved on the issue must be taken advantage of to finally resolve the proposed reforms by the end of December 2005, at the latest. We also believe more equitable representation of the developing countries for the non-permanent seats of the Council is vital and long overdue.

Tuvalu recognizes the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the social and economic development and security of Tuvalu and other Pacific island countries. Given our exposure and the level of mobility of our communities, particularly our seafarers who serve on merchant ships worldwide, there is an

urgent need for assistance from the international community, such as that provided under the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, to help us raise awareness in Tuvalu to combat the threats of the epidemic. We need technical and financial assistance for these efforts.

In terms of natural resources, Tuvalu is really a big ocean, small island country. The Pacific Ocean that surrounds our islands provides the vital source of our livelihoods and economic and social development. Increasingly, however, we are becoming concerned with the real threats of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and of pollution to the oceans from waste, particularly from the trans-shipment of highly radioactive and toxic materials in our region. We would need to seek the understanding of the international community to help us save our oceans and support fully the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy adopted in 2002.

An important source of financial flows to developing countries, particularly also to small island developing nations such as Tuvalu, is migrant workers' remittances from developed countries. Indeed remittances from our overseas workers, and particularly Tuvaluan seafarers serving abroad, provide a substantive source of income so vital for social and economic development in Tuvalu.

Tuvalu fully supports the affording of urgent attention to the issue of migrant workers' rights, including the maintenance of competency on international standards and migrant workers' safety and security, in the international agenda, in order to ensure sustaining this vital source of capital for small island developing States.

An issue of continuing concerns to Tuvalu is the question of the representation in the United Nations. Regrettably, this august body cannot be said to be universal without the rightful representation of the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan. Tuvalu feels that recognizing the political and democratic developments in Taiwan, the active and responsible participation of Taiwan in world affairs, especially in trade, commerce, health, and international development, without representation in the United Nations is unjust and morally wrong. This state of affairs needs to be corrected. We seek a proper review by the United Nations of this important issue, as well as the escalation of tension in the Taiwan Strait following the enactment by the People's Republic of China of its "anti-secession law".

In conclusion, we want to reiterate that efforts aimed at the sustainable development of small island developing States like Tuvalu, will be of no meaning unless the issue of climate change and sea level is addressed decisively, and with urgency. Tuvalu's interest is not self serving. The more serious consequences of not acting now on climate change, as we are already witnessing the world over, will be felt everywhere.

It is our fervent hope that out of this common house of our United Nations family, there will emerge better understanding and goodwill for the long lasting security and survival of Tuvalu and the whole world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Tuvalu for his statement.

The Honourable Maatia Toafa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Tuvalu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

The Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mosisili (Lesotho): My delegation associates itself with the compliments extended to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of this session and to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping of Gabon.

The United Nations was born 60 years ago when the brutality of war impressed itself on all as far

beyond human comprehension and tolerance. The Organization became a source of hope, founded as it was on the inalienable, interlinked and mutually interdependent pillars of development, human rights and security.

Member States of this Organization have increasingly yearned for its reform in order to make it more democratic and responsive to the needs of all nations, rich and poor, big and small, strong and weak. We should recall that the last reform of the United Nations was in 1963, a good four decades ago. Against this background, my delegation pays tribute to the Secretary-General for his report entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2005). That report formed the basis for discussions by Member States as they prepared for the five-year review of the Millennium Declaration and for this sixtieth session of the General Assembly. It raises critical issues regarding the reform of this world body to enable it to meet the challenges and threats of the twenty-first century — a daunting task indeed.

However, we have noted with regret that some Member States have relegated to the back burner critical issues of development, giving priority instead to security issues, particularly the reform of the Security Council. As a result of this trend, we foresee an emerging, untenable and, indeed, unwarranted situation with the potential to divide regions and/or continents and to adversely affect cordial relations between States.

In order to move in unison, the international community should strive to advance the global development, human rights and security agendas simultaneously. All agree that the HIV and AIDS pandemic has emerged as a major threat to development, reversing, as it does, all the gains that have been made so far. We all also agree that the ravages of extreme poverty continue to haunt us. Needless to say, extreme poverty constitutes a violation of human dignity. Armed conflicts also hamper development. Africa presents a classical example of how those menaces compromise not only peace and security, but also development, thus militating against respect for human rights.

Indeed, it is no coincidence that development has been one of the key objectives of most, if not all, major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. Hence, my delegation welcomes the efforts of those donor countries that have achieved the 0.7 per cent target of gross national income as official development assistance (ODA), with 0.2 per cent of gross national income for the least developed countries. We also welcome initiatives by some countries to set up timetables for fulfilling their ODA targets. However, we reiterate our appeal that developed countries abide by their commitments to help developing countries in all the relevant areas. They have to accelerate and increase the flows of ODA and foreign direct investment. They also have to adopt appropriate measures to fully integrate small and vulnerable economies into the multilateral trading system, cancel debt, transfer technology, render financial and technical assistance and provide capacity-building programmes for developing countries.

On this auspicious occasion, my delegation expresses sincere appreciation for all initiatives recently taken to address the needs of developing countries, especially the debt cancellation extended by the G-8 countries to highly indebted poor countries. However, we appeal for debt cancellation for all least developed countries in order to enable them to redirect their meagre resources to national development programmes. It is an irrefutable fact that a substantial percentage of the national budgets of least developed countries that do not fall within the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative category is consumed by servicing their debts.

Lesotho supports the launching of a series of "quick wins", as recommended by the Secretary-General in his report, as this would go a long way towards broadening commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and promoting economic growth in many developing countries. In our view, the criteria for the selection of countries for the implementation of the "quick wins" should be fair and transparent.

Terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors, the existence of nuclear weapons, and armed conflict top the list of global security issues. There is, therefore, an urgent need to conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism. My delegation hopes that the General Assembly will soon initiate negotiations on an international instrument to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors. We regret the fact

that the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was not able to reach consensus. However, we wish to emphasize the need for all States parties to adhere to the three pillars of the Treaty — namely, disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We also wish to encourage the nuclear-weapon States that have not yet ratified or acceded to the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to become parties to those important treaties.

The notorious use of small arms and light weapons in armed conflicts is well documented. Lesotho therefore regrets the inability on the part of the Open-ended Working Group on small arms to adopt a legally binding document. We also attach great importance to the issue of prevention of internal armed conflicts by the international community. While we support the moral obligation behind the proposed new concept of the "responsibility to protect", we suggest that the issue should be subjected to further consideration by Member States, guided by the fundamental principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Needless to say, the sanctity of Article 51 of the Charter should be preserved.

The Kingdom of Lesotho considers it the responsibility of the international community, with the United Nations playing the central role, to put in place effective measures aimed at preventing genocide, ethnic cleansing and the atrocities perpetrated on women and children caught up in armed conflict. Consequently, my delegation considers the enhanced role of the major organs of the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly, to be of paramount importance. One of the major constraints of the United Nations is that it lacks a mechanism designed to avoid State collapse and the slide into war, or to assist countries in their transition from war to peace. It is within this context that Lesotho supports the proposed establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission.

In the area of human rights, we support the elevation of the Commission on Human Rights to a Human Rights Council, a body that would be apolitical and insist on the protection both of civil and political rights and of economic, social and cultural rights. For my delegation, the flaws of the Commission lay mostly in its focus and not necessarily in its size.

It is in this twenty-first century that peace, security, the right to self-determination, respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms must be guaranteed as the norm rather than the exception. Hence, our call for the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and complete withdrawal from their occupied territories, the independence of the Saharawi people, the lifting of the unilateral economic embargo against the people of Cuba and the end to armed conflicts, particularly in Africa. These matters must be addressed and resolved urgently, comprehensively and honestly, without fear or favour, and without malice to anybody.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn.

Mr. Asselborn (*spoke in French*): Just a few days ago, in this same Hall, the follow-up High-level Meeting was held on the Millennium, bringing together an unprecedented number of high political leaders from all over the world. After a process of discussion and negotiation, both lengthy and thorough, we adopted what should serve as our road map for the period to come. The final document should not only inspire but also give specific direction to, the actions of the international community in the United Nations.

While not all our expectations or ambitions were realized in that document and considerable gaps cry out to be filled — I am thinking particularly of the crucial areas of disarmament and non-proliferation — we must, nevertheless, welcome the fact that around the central pillars of the United Nations, namely, development, peace and human rights, broad agreement has crystallized and a new international agenda has in fact emerged.

It is particularly appropriate and propitious that the current regular session of the General Assembly has opened immediately following on the important High-level Meeting. While we may feel that the foundation was laid during that important event, what

we have to do now is to complete what has been undertaken, consolidate the sections of walls that have been erected and build those parts that have only been sketched out — and here I am thinking particularly of the Human Rights Council — and provide our project with a sound roof.

Renewal of multilateralism in the context of the special conditions at the beginning of this century and the reform of the United Nations must be conducted with determination, driven by a real sense of urgency in the light of the significance of the task that awaits us and the crucial matters at stake for billions of men and women.

Knowing as I do, Sir, your personal commitment, your dynamism and your numerous qualities, I am convinced that you will direct the work of the sixtieth regular session of the General Assembly in such a way so as to ensure that we can, all together, carry out the urgent mandate entrusted to us by the High-level Meeting and, more particularly, by our peoples, who have placed their hopes on a revamped and strengthened United Nations system. It is in this spirit that my country is prepared to subscribe with conviction to the accountability pact proposed by our Secretary-General, whom I would, once again, like to congratulate for what he has been doing at the head of our Organization.

I would note with satisfaction your intention, Sir, to present a detailed and operational workplan in order to organize our work as effectively as possible so that we can complete the tasks awaiting us according to a fixed timetable. We have to provide concrete evidence that our Assembly will not go back to business as usual once the spotlights have been switched off.

For all those — and I am one of them — who believe that our Assembly, a veritable parliament of the nations of the world, has a paramount role to play in the emergence of a strong political consensus at the world level, the quick adoption of specific operational decisions should deal a sound rebuff to all those Cassandras, all those cynics and all those who uphold the status quo that opposes change.

In his opening statement at the sixtieth regular session of the General Assembly, our Secretary-General clearly defined the mission that awaits us in the coming months. Among the subjects that claim our attention, I would focus on the following: human rights, in order to strengthen the impact of this essential dimension in all the activities of the United Nations, particularly through the immediate creation of a Human Rights Council on the basis of the positive groundwork laid in the preparatory work of the High-level Meeting; the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, an innovative body; the reform of the main bodies of our Organization, including the urgent need to enlarge the Security Council in both categories of membership in order to make the Council more representative of the realities at the beginning of the twenty-first century and to make it more transparent and more effective; giving concrete form to the idea of "the responsibility to protect", whose confirmation in the final document is one of the main breakthroughs of the recent High-level Meeting; and finally, the reform of the administrative and financial management of the United Nations in order to consolidate the effectiveness and integrity of the Organization.

Let me also devote a few minutes to the question of development. Development remains the main political and moral issue of our time. It must be noted that progress towards the Millennium Development Goals has been uneven and some backward movement must be acknowledged, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The recently published Human Development Report notes that

> "In the midst of an increasingly prosperous global economy, 10.7 million children every year do not live to see their fifth birthday, and more than 1 billion people survive in abject poverty on less than $1 per day. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has inflicted the single greatest reversal in human development. In 2003, the pandemic claimed 3 million lives and left another five million people infected." (Human Development Report 2005, p. 1)

In view of these alarming facts, setting up and creating a genuine partnership for development, based on the groundwork of the Monterrey Conference and on the basis of shared responsibility borne by both the donor countries and the recipient countries, remains a matter of priority. The countries of the South must take their own development in hand by defining detailed national strategies that are effective and directed towards good governance and combating corruption. The countries of the North must fulfil their commitments in matters of trade, debt reduction and enhancing the quality of aid and good practices. Particular emphasis should be laid on increasing

financial flows for development. In this connection, when Luxembourg occupied the presidency of the European Union during the first half of this year, the member States of the European Union took the historic decision to commit themselves on a precise timetable to make a considerable increase of their official development aid (ODA) in order to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national products by 2015 at the latest. Four of the five countries, including my own, that have achieved or gone beyond 0.7 per cent — a target reconfirmed by the High-level Meeting — are member States of the European Union. The Government of Luxembourg has confirmed its intention to increase its ODA contribution in the years to come to one per cent of its gross national income.

Unfortunately, too often the fruits of development are erased by natural or man-made disasters. In the Sudan, in the Great Lakes region and elsewhere, this truth is demonstrated daily. There can be no development without security. There can be no security without development.

That is why I particularly welcome the agreement reached during the summit on the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission. That should make it possible for us to contemplate the tremendous problems of transition confronting the countries emerging from conflict from an overall viewpoint, bringing together the dimensions of crisis management, humanitarian aid, reconstruction of State structures and local and legal structures and providing essential public goods and services, while at the same time re-launching the process of economic and social development.

On the basis of the mandate given by the summit, Luxembourg actively supports the reform of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, which should take shape in coming months so that this renovated Fund can become fully operational by the beginning of 2006. My country has already announced, just a few days ago here in New York, that it would be making a contribution of $4 million to the capital of this Fund, and other States have also confirmed large contributions.

If development is, according to the well-known formula, the new name of peace, we cannot fail, nevertheless, to note that numerous international conflicts and intra-State conflicts and hotbeds of tension continue to dot the face of the world.

Peace and stability in the Middle East continue to be at the forefront of our concerns.

The current President of the Council of the European Union, my friend Jack Straw, recalled two days ago from this rostrum the spirit in which the negotiations on the nuclear issue were conducted with Iran in recent months. Cooperation and respect for international norms and treaties, rather than discrimination or a desire to create dependency, were what motivated us in this case. In the Paris Agreement Iran subscribed to a total suspension of all activities connected with enrichment and all reprocessing activities. It is that commitment that made it possible to develop political and economic cooperation with the European Union. It is that commitment — which, I hardly need to recall, has been ratified by the International Atomic Energy Agency — that I today call upon Iran to respect.

In this context, I should also like to welcome the agreement that was reached just today with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon all nuclear programmes and to rejoin the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This is excellent news.

On 22 June 2005, more than 80 countries and organizations met in Brussels at the International Conference on Iraq, sponsored jointly by the European Union and the United States, with the presence of our Secretary-General, and expressed their support for the Iraqi Transitional Government and its political, economic and security priorities. That important Conference made it possible, in particular, for the States members of the European Union to reaffirm their unanimous and united support for a secure, stable, unified, prosperous, democratic Iraq, respectful of human rights, which will benefit fully from the exercise of its sovereignty, cooperate constructively with its neighbours and with the international community, and end violence in that country. And it is our Organization that, more than ever, must be a driving force, play a leading role, in that context.

The Near East has only rarely been the scene of positive developments. This is why I should like particularly and expressly to welcome the political courage of the leaders of the two sides regarding the successful withdrawal from Gaza and certain parts of the north of the West Bank. Now we should take advantage of that positive dynamic to launch a genuine peace prospect based on the road map, which continues

to be the essential framework in this matter. The conditions to promote the emergence of a climate of peace were recalled by the European Council on 16 and 17 June 2005. In particular, the fact that the Palestinian Authority is taking control of Gaza now provides it with an opportunity to demonstrate its institutional and administrative maturity, particularly as regards maintaining law and order and combating terrorism. The cessation of all acts of violence by the parties is also an essential requirement.

Regarding the crucial question of Israeli colonization activities in the occupied territories, the European Council noted that "the policy of colonization is an obstacle to peace and threatens making virtually impossible any solution based on the coexistence of two States". In the same context, the European Council expressed concern at the continuation of the building of the separation barrier in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and its surrounding areas, which contradicts the pertinent provisions of international law. At the same time, of course, the Council recognized the right of Israel to protect its citizens against attacks.

Let us assume that the next meeting of the Quartet, which will be held in New York tomorrow, will find political formulas that will make it possible to continue the positive dynamic of disengagement from Gaza and will clear the way for a just and lasting peace in this divided part of our world.

As very often happens, patches of clouds and glimmers of hope are mingled when we analyse the international situation, but one thing remains constant, and that is the central role of the United Nations in the search for international peace and security. Sixty years after the signing of the San Francisco Charter, we have all met together here to confirm our contract of confidence with this Organization, the United Nations, which is our common heritage — a United Nations renovated and reformed, synchronized with the threats and challenges of our times and able to respond to the expectations of the peoples of the world. As a signatory to the Charter in 1945, Luxembourg, as far as it is concerned, is ready to renew this pledge of confidence with enthusiasm, confidence and determination.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Dermot Ahern, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland.

Mr. Ahern (Ireland): Sixty years ago, our predecessors, having adopted the United Nations Charter, made sure that the United Nations immediately got down to work. We need to act now with the same urgency.

In the face of the profound challenges that confront the world — some of long standing, some new — our heads of State and Government last week agreed on a far-reaching agenda for change. Although the summit did not achieve all that we had hoped for, it is still a major step forward.

It is now time for follow-up. On Saturday the Secretary-General proposed an accountability pact. He undertook to deliver on his obligations but said that we, the Member States, must deliver on ours. That requires real political leadership all round. I here commit Ireland to playing its part.

The United Nations has no Member more loyal than Ireland. But we realize that the United Nations needs to change, just as the world around it has changed. This has to be our focus over the next year. And what we do affects not just us here in this Hall, but billions of our fellow human beings.

For the first time in its history, the human race has the capacity to end extreme poverty. The summit has endorsed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the benchmark of progress towards that objective. Ireland will play its full part. Last week, my Prime Minister committed Ireland to reaching the 0.7 target by 2012. By that year we will be spending up to 1.5 billion euros annually. Moreover, our aid will remain completely untied and directed towards the very poorest. Africa is, and will continue to be, the primary focus of Ireland's aid programme.

Over the past year, we have been tragically reminded of human vulnerability in the face of natural disasters. Their causes may be beyond our control, but how we react is in our own hands. Ireland will place an even stronger emphasis on emergency and humanitarian relief. In particular, we are urgently examining how we ourselves can improve our own capacity to deliver effective civilian protection in such cases.

Conflict resolution is a vital part of the United Nations mission. It is not enough to end war. We must win the peace. Without coherent peacebuilding strategies, vulnerable countries may not escape the cycle of

violence. From the start, my country has been a leading proponent of the Peacebuilding Commission. Now that it has been agreed, let us work hard to get it up and running by the beginning of 2006.

At the summit, there was agreement on the vital principle that the international community should take action to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity when the responsible Governments fail to do so. I hope and pray that such eventualities will never again come to pass. But if they do, we must act in a way which honours that solemn commitment. We have failed grievously in the past and must never do so again.

The summit has committed us to strengthening the United Nations human rights machinery. I strongly welcome the decision to double the budget of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. And the decision to establish a Human Rights Council was very positive. Now the General Assembly must move swiftly to flesh out the modalities and the structure. It must be composed and operate in a way which avoids the failings of the past. But the best features of the Commission on Human Rights, such as its engagement with civil society, must be retained. Ireland particularly values the work of human rights defenders in calling Governments to account, and that must continue.

Once more, we meet in the shadow of terrorism. So many recent and terrible acts remind us that no country is immune, as Ireland knows from its own long and bitter experiences. We should agree on the comprehensive convention on combating terrorism without delay during this session of the General Assembly. And all existing specific conventions must be fully implemented, and practical cooperation made more effective.

The threat of terrorism requires a robust security response. But that response must be intelligent, calibrated and proportionate. It must respect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. And although no cause can ever justify terrorism, the political and social conditions within which it breeds must also be addressed.

We cannot ignore the threat posed to our security by weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. Ireland was deeply disappointed at the failure of the recent Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We were equally disappointed at the inability of the summit to make any progress on that absolutely vital issue. But we cannot afford to give up hope. The logic in favour of the twin and mutually reinforcing goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation remains compelling.

I welcome what appear to be positive developments with regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and salute the leadership of its neighbours and the United States in the negotiating process.

Under the NPT, countries have every right to choose the option of civilian nuclear power. But it is essential that they do so in full accordance with the NPT and under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). International confidence in their exclusively peaceful intent is also vital and, where damaged, must be rebuilt in a clear and fully verifiable way. With our other European Union partners, Ireland fully supports the efforts of the European Union three to achieve that outcome with regard to Iran.

We must continue to reform the structures of the United Nations. The need to align the Security Council with today's realities is widely acknowledged. This remains an important piece of unfinished business. We must fulfil our commitment to revitalize the Assembly. And we need to take a serious look at how the Economic and Social Council can better fulfil its role.

The Secretary-General has made clear his commitment to delivering on management reform within the Organization, as was requested by the summit. Very substantial progress on this question must be made during the present session.

I would now like to touch on a number of issues of specific concern to Ireland.

In relation to the Middle East and Iraq, the achievement of a lasting peace in the Middle East is of great importance to the entire world. Here, too, political will is the crucial ingredient. The initial difficult phase of Israel's disengagement from settlements in Gaza has taken place peacefully. The courage and the commitment of Prime Minister Sharon and his Government have been commendable. Much, however, remains to be done.

I welcome the determination of President Abbas and his colleagues to take full advantage of the

opportunity presented by the withdrawal. They must, with our help, maintain their efforts to ensure peace, security and the rule of law. And disengagement will truly be a success only if Gaza becomes economically viable, with free trade and free movement. This is clearly in Israel's interests, as well as in those of the Palestinians.

Disengagement is an important advance. It cannot be the end, but rather a step towards the full implementation of the Quartet's road map. With the support and the assistance of the international community, both sides must press forward and renew momentum towards a permanent peace. It is also vital that, in particular in relation to the West Bank — as my delegation has spelled out in detail on many occasions — Israel desist completely from further steps which could jeopardize the viability of a two-State solution.

With respect to Iraq, the people of Iraq face appalling challenges from terrorism. Despite that, they have courageously taken steps towards the restoration of full democracy and the control of their own destiny. The final decision on the adoption of the draft constitution now rests with the people themselves in next month's referendum. The international community must do whatever it can to ensure that the vote takes place in a democratic and peaceful way. We have seen elsewhere that, no matter how difficult and imperfect progress may be, with political will and the support of the international community, it is possible to move forward, away from conflict.

The elections yesterday in Afghanistan are a further welcome milestone in its transition.

I also commend the excellent progress made in Aceh. I am proud that Irish soldiers are among those taking part in the monitoring mission run by the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Sadly, in Burma-Myanmar, human rights and democracy continue to be denied. That is most acutely symbolized by the continued detention of the heroic Aung San Suu Kyi. The cumulative length of her detention now approaches ten years. Her ordeal is not forgotten by the people of Ireland. I urge ASEAN, in particular, to demonstrate effective regional leadership and to heighten pressure on the regime to release her and move along the path of reform.

As I said earlier, Ireland is particularly committed to Africa. We contribute substantially to development and conflict resolution, and we will continue to increase that contribution. But external help can do only so much. In the resolution of various political crises affecting the continent, the key requirement is, again, political leadership and vision.

We welcome the recent signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the Sudan, which must now be fully implemented. I am encouraged that, despite the tragic and untimely death of Vice-President Garang, both sides have reaffirmed their commitment to the Agreement.

However, the situation in Darfur continues to be deeply worrying. My Government fully supports the African Union's mission to improve security there. We look forward to early progress in the International Criminal Court investigation into human rights violations. The Government of the Sudan and the parties in Darfur must renew their efforts to conclude a comprehensive peace agreement by December, and the international community must continue to support efforts led by the United Nations to provide humanitarian assistance.

I welcome recent progress in the Great Lakes region, in particular in Burundi, where the elected representatives have shown generosity of spirit and courage. I look forward to parallel progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ireland will contribute to support for the electoral process there.

But I am seriously concerned at the situation in Zimbabwe. The downward spiral, which, above all, hurts the ordinary people of that nation, must be reversed. The Zimbabwean Government should start by accepting the recommendations of the Secretary General's Special Envoy.

Turning to a topic closer to home, in the Northern Ireland peace process it is also time for renewed leadership. There is a real prospect of the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement — which was put together in 1998 and voted by the people of Ireland — and the sustained operation of its institutions. The British and Irish Governments are partners in that endeavour, and we look for others to join us in delivering their promises.

The Irish Republican Army took a major and courageous step forward in July. We now expect early

movement to deliver fully, in a verified and convincing way, on its commitment to decommissioning. There is no room for fudge and, equally, no room for any continuation of paramilitarism or criminality. Sinn Fein should also show leadership in moving to support the Police Service of Northern Ireland and to take their place in the governance of policing. The Police Service is showing professionalism, courage and even-handedness. The completion of the policing project would represent a profound move towards peace and political stability, and I call upon Sinn Fein, in particular, to take the hard decisions needed.

Equally, leadership is needed from within the Unionist community. When the IRA's commitments are fully delivered and verified, then the way will be clear for renewed political discussions by all parties on the reactivation of the Northern Ireland institutions. The Unionist parties say they are prepared to share power, when it is clear that the threat of violence has been removed once and for all. It should soon be time for them to demonstrate that good faith.

I also look to the Unionist community to show determination in condemning and doing all it can to discourage the continuation of the appalling lawlessness, which has in recent times so badly affected both loyalist communities and their vulnerable nationalist neighbours. The need for political leadership is so urgent precisely because the prospect of decisive progress is so real and so alluring.

Following the summit, we have a collective responsibility to grasp the opportunity to reinvigorate the United Nations. If we fail, our peoples today and in the future will not judge us kindly.

Ireland gives its full backing to the Secretary-General's proposals for change. I personally was honoured to act as one of his envoys, because, like him, we recognized that the United Nations was at a fork in the road. At the summit, we chose to start down the right track, but there is a long way to travel. I pledge again that over the year ahead Ireland will remain at the forefront of the drive for reform and renewal.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdelwaheb Abdallah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia.

Mr. Abdallah (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my distinct pleasure to express to you and to your friendly country, the Kingdom of Sweden, my most sincere congratulations on your election to the presidency at this sixtieth session of the General Assembly and to wish you every success in your mission.

I also express to your predecessor Mr. Jean Ping, my deep appreciation for his excellent management of the proceedings of the previous session.

Allow me to take this opportunity to convey my thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General, commending his diligent efforts in assisting the Organization to play its role and achieve its noble objectives of maintaining peace and security and furthering development in the world.

Tunisia, which celebrates, along with other members of the international community the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, reiterates its constant commitment to the noble principles of the Charter and reaffirms its determination to continue to contribute, so that the Organization may be as effective as possible.

Our world today is witnessing rapid and successive developments, often marked by an increase of tensions and the widening of the development gap between the North and the South. This requires that we intensify our consultations and coordination on the question of reforming the United Nations and developing its institutions, in accordance with a comprehensive vision based on enhancing solidarity, mutual assistance and partnership among peoples so that our Organization will be able to deal with current international issues efficiently.

Many of those issues still constitute a source of concern for the international community, because of their impact on security and stability, and foremost among them is the Middle East problem.

In keeping with its commitment, and that of its President, His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, to peace as a strategic choice, Tunisia has contributed to all efforts and initiatives aimed at reaching a just, comprehensive and durable settlement to the Palestinian question. We reiterate our call to all parties, more particularly to the Quartet, to take advantage of recent positive developments in the region in order to resume peace negotiations, thus allowing the Palestinian people to recover their legitimate national rights and establish their own

independent State on their land as well as bringing security, stability and prosperity to all peoples of the region.

We feel that achieving just, comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East requires the recovery by sisterly Syria and Lebanon of all their occupied territories.

We also express the hope that sisterly Iraq will complete its political process and strengthen its constitutional institutions in accordance with the aspirations of the Iraqi people, within a context of security, stability and national unity.

Tunisia welcomes the important steps taken by the Sudanese Government towards national reconciliation, in keeping with the aspirations of the Sudanese people to the consolidation of security and stability in that country.

Tunisia is sparing no effort, along with the other sisterly Arab countries, in laying the foundations for a new phase of joint Arab action, promoting cooperation in all the political, economic and cultural fields, and reinforcing the process of development and modernization, in line with the proposals made and decisions taken by the Arab Summit in May 2004, which Tunisia had the honour to host.

We are also keen on consolidating the bonds of fraternity and cooperation with all fellow Arab Maghreb countries and completing the process of building the Arab Maghreb Union, thus meeting the aspirations of the peoples of the Maghreb to development and complementarity.

Although it has witnessed a number of positive developments, the African continent continues to suffer from the persistence of tensions and conflicts in many of its regions. Additional efforts are required in order to take further steps towards their settlement. Bringing to completion the establishment of the basic structures of the African Union would enable African countries to move ahead in promoting cooperation and reinforcing the foundations of security and stability in the continent. This, in turn, will encourage development in African countries and facilitate their integration into the world economy.

At the Euro-Mediterranean level, Tunisia is entering a new phase in its relations with the European Union, a phase marked by a determination to further promote, develop and enlarge the scope of partnership with that Union on the basis of cooperation, solidarity, complementarity and mutual respect, in line with the purposes and principles adopted at the Barcelona Conference as we prepare to celebrate the tenth anniversary of its Declaration.

Tunisia is also endeavouring to strengthen ties of friendship and enlarge the scope of cooperation with the countries of the American and Asian continents in order to establish a solidarity-based partnership that will lay the foundations for a new stage in these relations. That would serve the interests of all parties, bring their peoples closer to one another and contribute to consolidating the foundations of stability, peace and prosperity in the world.

The intensification of violence and terrorism, despite the joint efforts undertaken for many years to confront that grave scourge, deepens our conviction that the most effective way to deal with terrorism is by unifying our methods for tackling it, thereby strengthening the capacity of the international community to confront terrorism and eradicate its root causes.

In that regard, His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali proposed the convening of an international conference under United Nations auspices aimed at establishing a binding international code of conduct on combating terrorism.

Proceeding from its steadfast adherence to the principles of solidarity and dialogue among peoples and its continuing endeavours to strengthen stability and development in the world, Tunisia will take an active role in achieving the objectives spelled out in the Millennium Declaration and in finding appropriate solutions to the international issues we face today.

In that regard, we would mention the General Assembly's adoption of the Tunisian proposal for the establishment of a World Solidarity Fund. The international community must now provide the necessary financial resources so that the Fund can launch its activities and achieve its noble objectives of reducing poverty and famine, particularly in some regions of Africa.

Tunisia calls for the strengthening of world solidarity, the benefits of which were most recently manifested in the international efforts to alleviate the enormous damage caused by both the tsunami disaster and hurricane Katrina.

As we prepare to host the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society — held in response to a Tunisian proposal dating back to 1998 — Tunisia is looking forward to the high-level international participation of Governments, the private sector and civil society in that important global event in order to give it the best possible chance of success. A successful outcome will help to establish a solidarity-based digital culture that allows developing countries to benefit from the vast prospects offered by information and communication technologies and to make the best use of them in their development plans.

Furthermore, Tunisia wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to all Member States and to the international and regional organizations that have contributed to the success of its international initiative to proclaim 2005 the International Year of Sport and Physical Education in the service of peace, security and development in the world.

Tunisia will continue to make an effective contribution to strengthening the culture of dialogue and the values of tolerance and cultural communication among civilizations and among all the world's countries and peoples, and to work against fanaticism and isolationism. We once again underline the importance of those values in spreading security, peace and stability throughout the world, thus freeing humanity to direct its efforts towards comprehensive and sustainable development in a spirit of optimism and confidence in a better future.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Petros Molyviatis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

Mr. Molyviatis (Greece): Let me begin, Mr. President, by congratulating you upon your election as President of the General Assembly and assure you of my country's unwavering support for your endeavours. Your previous experience at the United Nations ensures that under your guidance the Assembly will continue to promote the values and principles of our Organization.

I also wish to extend our sincere thanks to the outgoing President, Mr. Ping. His tireless efforts in all fields, particularly in the preparations for the High-level Plenary Meeting, have been exemplary.

Greece fully subscribes to the statement delivered earlier by the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union, as well as to the European Union priorities presented to the General Assembly.

I would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his relentless efforts to promote peace and security and to safeguard the moral authority and the pre-eminent role of our United Nations.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we continue to face many threats and challenges that undermine the basic values and principles of our societies and test our will and determination to abide by the obligations and restraints inherent in those values and principles. Only through concerted collective action, dialogue and mutual understanding can we confront them and pave the way for a better and brighter future.

Terrorism has emerged as the most important challenge of our times, creating an atmosphere of collective fear, intolerance and a never-ending cycle of violence. Throughout history, violence has never proven to be an answer to our problems. Peace, stability and security can only be achieved through tolerance, acceptance and the realization that our common interests far outweigh our differences. There is no justification whatsoever for terrorism. It is high time for an urgent collective effort to put an immediate end to that modern scourge.

Natural disasters, like the tsunami in Asia and the recent hurricane in the southern part of the United States — with so many victims and unimaginable destruction — also demonstrate sufficiently the importance of international cooperation and the urgent need for human solidarity.

I am fully aware of the importance of economic development for a considerable part of the world. Security and sustainable development go hand in hand. Our collective commitment and efforts are needed to correct the imbalances and disparities in the world. It is only a matter of time before extreme poverty, hunger and the catastrophic impact of widespread diseases will lead to strife, internal or external. The foremost example of that is in Africa, where the vicious cycle of poverty, conflict and HIV/AIDS produces an explosive combination ripping apart the fabric of their societies and threatening them with unprecedented and dire consequences.

Multilateral cooperation is the only way to a better world. The international multilateral system must be enhanced and strengthened. Greece fully participates in the policies formulated by the European Union and the various international organizations that contribute to the economic development of all areas of the world in order to redress existing imbalances.

We appreciate the value of cultural diversity in a world unfortunately so often divided by discrimination. We believe in dialogue among cultures, among people and among societies. We fully support the peaceful resolution of all our disputes on the basis of international law and the United Nations Charter. We are deeply committed to the United Nations and what it represents and to effective multilateralism and the pre-eminence of international law.

Looking at Greece's immediate neighbourhood, the Balkans, we realize that it has not yet been fully transformed into a region of peace, stability and prosperity.

In Kosovo, the trauma created by the repression of the past and the inter-ethnic violence that plagued the region for so long has yet to be healed. There is a need for a settlement that is in conformity with international legality, as expressed by the United Nations, and with European standards and values — a settlement which will enhance regional stability.

We remain convinced that European integration is the only way to find permanent solutions to existing problems and challenges in the area. At the same time, regional cooperation must be strengthened so as to effectively address the problems of the neighbourhood. Greece, which holds the chairmanship-in-office of the South-East European Cooperation Process, is determined to strengthen the institutional aspects of that process and to develop it into the real voice of the region.

I deeply regret that the Cyprus problem remains unresolved. In the 31 years of military occupation of more than one third of the territory of Cyprus, Greece has strongly supported every attempt and initiative by the United Nations to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.

In the light of the outcome of last year's referendums, which should be fully respected, any new initiative will have to be carefully prepared so as to ensure real chances for success. For our part, we are ready to work towards building the necessary common ground, which will render possible the re-launching of meaningful negotiations.

Our ultimate goal remains an agreed solution between the two parties. We remain steadfastly committed to reaching a just and viable solution for the reunification of the island following negotiations on the basis of the Secretary-General's plan and the relevant Security Council resolutions, and in conformity with European Union principles and acquis. In this endeavour, Greece will spare no effort.

The climate of our bilateral relations with Turkey over recent years has been constantly improving. We have made vigorous efforts to put our relations on a new, solid track. Significant progress has been achieved in several areas of our bilateral cooperation, and Turkey's European Union perspective will further broaden the scope of our relations.

The latest developments in the Middle East allow us to maintain a certain level of reserved optimism. The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and parts of the northern West Bank does, indeed, constitute an important milestone. This is a momentous opportunity to revitalize the road map and to move the process a step closer to achieving a fair, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The road map remains the framework for the achievement of a just and lasting peace. Both parties should concentrate on fulfilling their respective obligations and commitments and refrain from any and all unilateral actions which threaten to prejudge the outcome of final status negotiations and undermine efforts at building confidence on the ground.

Our shared goal remains the realization of a two-State solution: Israel and a democratic, viable and territorially contiguous State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

With regard to Iraq, Greece underlines the importance of its territorial integrity and unity in the framework of a federal system. We remain particularly concerned, however, about the ongoing violence, which makes it imperative to follow the timetable of the political process that will lead the country to normalcy, which is of vital importance for peace and stability in the entire region. We fully support Iraq in this difficult mission.

My country has a long, historic relationship with the African continent and its peoples. We have witnessed with great concern the series of conflict situations that have been plaguing Africa for many years. We are following developments in all cases and are trying to make positive contributions, whether in the Sudan, in the Democratic Republic of Congo or other countries of West Africa, in the settlement of the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and elsewhere. The emerging pivotal role of the African Union in dealing with African crises has our full support and deep appreciation.

Last Friday, we adopted a historic declaration, which constitutes a new and important step in the direction of enforcing collective security and strengthening the United Nations capacity to deal with the new challenges and threats that our societies are facing today. Our efforts should now focus on the implementation of the commitments made, so that generations to come can live in a better and more secure world.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Freitas do Amaral (Portugal) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I am returning to the Assembly Hall after 10 years. In September 1995, I had the honour of being elected President of the General Assembly. I well know, therefore, what a difficult task it is, and I congratulate you, Mr. President, Ambassador Jan Eliasson, on your recent election. I wish you every success in discharging your lofty functions. I would also like to compliment the outgoing President, Mr. Ping, on the exceptional work that he did during the previous session.

I offer my best wishes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. My country greatly values the excellent work that he has done so far, and the Portuguese Government wishes to express its solidarity with him in connection with the difficult times that has been through, as well as its continued support for the enormous tasks and challenges that lie ahead.

We share some of the disappointment felt by the Secretary-General regarding the failure to approve many of the proposed reforms of the Organization that he set out in his excellent report, "In larger freedom". The entire process started 10 years ago, in 1995-96, under my presidency, and I can assure the Assembly that one year later, when I left office, there were already many consensus-based solutions that could have been approved. But insufficient use was made of the 10 years that have since passed.

We are left with the conviction that progress towards sound reform will be viable only if it maintains, as its reference, the objectives set out in the proposals of the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

What is sound reform of the United Nations? In my opinion, such reform would fulfil, at least, the following five prerequisites.

First, such reforms must respect and reaffirm the fundamental principles and values of the Charter. Secondly, they must create better conditions for the maintenance and re-establishment of peace, guaranteeing security and dealing with the offenders in either case. Thirdly, they must include strong measures in support of development so as to improve the living conditions of the world's poorest countries and reduce the enormous gap that exists between the countries of the North and those of the South.

Fourthly, such reforms must promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law, internationally, as well as within each State. Fifthly, they must establish a basis and the necessary conditions for a better understanding among peoples, for a dialogue among civilizations, for an understanding of cultural and religious diversity, and for a spirit of tolerance, cooperation and friendship among nations, Governments and individuals.

In addition to those five prerequisites, there is still a need to consider reorganizing the Secretariat, which is an important instrument for attaining the objectives of the United Nations. Make no mistake: I have enough personal experience to be able to state that the staff of this Organization is, generally speaking, highly competent, dedicated and professional. But we must all understand that, in a large Organization such as this one, like in any other, there will always be a need for constant modernization.

Last week the United Nations reform was set in motion. We must continue to work hard, year after year, phase by phase, with the energy and the spirit of compromise that is the hallmark of diplomacy and which must therefore not be absent from the "temple of diplomacy" that is the United Nations.

First and foremost, the tasks to be accomplished in the coming months — which have Portugal's unreserved support — will be to do what is necessary to make the Peacebuilding Commission operational; to implement the already approved concept of the "responsibility to protect"; and to establish the new Human Rights Council.

Development is an urgent task that cannot be postponed. The poorest countries call for justice, and they deserve it; the richest countries insist on a code of ethics, and they must therefore fulfil the duties that derive from it.

In that regard, Portugal fully endorses the vision expressed and reaffirmed by the United Nations which accords priority to development — understood to be comprehensive development, as expressed in the Millennium Development Goals — and which is closely linked to security and the rule of law. Democracy and security constitute the sine qua non condition for effective, sustained and equitable development.

In terms of official development assistance, Portugal hopes to reach the agreed target of 0.51 per cent of gross domestic product in 2010, in order to pave the way to achieving the ambitious goal of 0.7 per cent in 2015.

The efforts of Portugal have been mainly — but not exclusively — directed towards the least developed countries, and sub-Saharan Africa in particular.

We therefore reaffirm the need to pay active and committed attention to the special needs of Africa. In that way, we will fulfil effectively the commitments undertaken to strengthen cooperation with the New Partnership for Africa's Development and with regional and subregional organizations.

The report of the Secretary-General rightly reminds us that every country is primarily responsible for its own development, in a framework of good governance, which is a prerequisite in this context.

Basically, it is a matter of implementing the eighth Millennium Goal: to create a global partnership for development, whose importance in promoting a more equitable and just world I would like to stress here.

That is why I have no hesitation in stating that we must remain actively committed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, including strengthening action in priority areas. Our common future is at stake, and I would like to take this opportunity to announce that Portugal has decided to contribute to the United Nations Democracy Fund.

For Portugal, environmental concerns are a clear priority; addressing them must promote, not detract from, development. In that domain, we will actively participate in international efforts to combat climate change, honouring our commitments and limiting greenhouse-gas emissions, so that the European Union can attain the goals agreed in the context of the Kyoto Protocol. We hope that the next Conference, to be held in Montreal, will mark the launching of a negotiating process on climate-related issues for the post-2012 period.

One of the most serious threats to peace and security today is terrorism. It must be fought with resolve, within the framework of the rule of law and with respect for human rights. There can be no doubt that one of the aims of terrorists is to weaken and distort even the most elementary of the universal values adopted by States and their peoples. Because we are fighting back in self-defence, they say that our actions — theirs and ours — are morally equivalent. Portugal strongly rejects that view.

There can be no ambiguity in fighting terrorism. We must be clear on this and state, quite bluntly, that all acts that aim to kill or seriously injure civilians or non-combatants are acts of terrorism.

We believe that the United Nations provides a framework of reference for combating terrorism, and we therefore urge that a global convention on terrorism be adopted. Similarly, we welcome the counter-terrorism strategy drawn up by the Secretary-General, and we appeal for its effective implementation.

In that context, Portugal will sign the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism during this session of the General Assembly.

We must recognize that the largest cluster of threats to international peace and security today lies in the broader Middle East. Regardless of countries' positions on the Iraq war, it is now essential to do all we can, based on the clear existing mandates of the United Nations, to see that peace, democracy and human rights triumph. That could take a number of years, as in Afghanistan.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is important that, taking advantage of the current positive momentum, we hold serious negotiations aimed at reaching bilateral and multilateral agreements. The road map cannot be forgotten or indefinitely postponed. Just as Israel has an unquestionable right to live in peace within secure borders, the Palestinian State also has an unquestionable right to exist. Only through what is called the two-State policy can there be peace in the Middle East.

As for Iran, I should like to stress and support the efforts of the European Union to avert, through negotiations, another dangerous case of nuclear proliferation. The international community as a whole and the Iranian people themselves owe a great deal to the intelligent approach of the European Union in this matter. We are, and will continue to be, united in solidarity. Negotiations must continue.

Portugal is committed to strengthening cooperation among regions and civilizations in order to promote international peace and stability. Accordingly, the high-level political dialogue between Europe and Africa must be further strengthened, including through the convening of the Europe-Africa summit, towards which Portugal has been working tirelessly.

I reiterate Portugal's appeal to all interested parties to join in our effort to re-launch the Cairo process, which we believe could be instrumental in establishing that strategic partnership.

I also wish to publicly place on record my country's support for Spain's Alliance of Civilizations initiative. The European-African dialogue is also a dialogue among civilizations, as is the Ibero-American process, to which Portugal, Spain, Andorra and the Latin American countries are committed. That process will be formalized at the Salamanca Summit in October.

Over the past nine years, the dialogue among the eight States members of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries — which represents 200 million people living in four continents — has been intensified, with great success. Portugal participates in the dialogue with countries from Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia, a dialogue that it would like to see broadened as an indispensable tool for civilizations to live in peace and not be at war.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Portugal's faith in the centrality, legitimacy and indispensable role of the United Nations. While not forgetting our setbacks, but learning from them so that they are not repeated, we should bear in mind our many successes. Timor-Leste, which is here with us today as a full Member State, is one example of a United Nations success story.

In conclusion, I would like to remember the wise words of our second Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, who said:

(*spoke in English*)

> "The pursuit of peace and progress cannot end in a few years in either victory or defeat. The pursuit of peace and progress, with its trials and its errors, its successes and its setbacks, can never be relaxed and never abandoned."

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. K. Natwar Singh, Minister for External Affairs of India.

Mr. Singh (India): Your election, Sir, as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session comes at a significant moment in the history of the United Nations. The outcome document adopted by our heads of State or Government shortly after the beginning of the session represents the culmination of a long process. It started with the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. It continued with the Secretary-General's "In larger freedom" report, and the efforts of your distinguished predecessor to synthesize those ideas for the consideration of Member States. We thank all of those involved for their dedicated efforts.

We are united in our commitment to multilateralism; that is a good foundation for our further efforts. All countries, especially those from the developing world, played a significant role in the negotiations on the outcome document. Much was achieved; much has been left out. There are foundations on which we have to build, but there are also shortcomings which we need to correct in the process of implementation. A notable omission is the theme of disarmament. Our struggle for multilaterally negotiated, universal and verifiable nuclear disarmament, in a time-bound manner, must continue with vigour. The outcome document must serve as a road map, with its main elements acting as signposts in our discussions over the coming months under your stewardship, Mr. President.

You, Sir, have suggested a very appropriate theme for the general debate: "For a stronger and more effective United Nations: follow-up to and implementation of the High-Level Meeting in September 2005". We believe that that captures the spirit and essence of all that we, co-partners in the United Nations, wish to achieve.

India is the world's largest democracy. There is no historical precedent for a democracy of over 1 billion people. It is a tremendous undertaking. It is also an exciting and inspiring one. We are breaking new ground. The fact that Indian democracy works is a political miracle. The credit goes to the Indian voters. They ensure that India remains secular, democratic and pluralistic.

We also believe that we need to do much more to inculcate respect for and acceptance of pluralism. I am reminded of what Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation, said:

> "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."

Humankind is now learning, to some extent, to cope with the menace of terrorism. We all know that that evil is increasingly directed at innocent civilians. It invites the strongest condemnation. We all agree that there can be no justification for terrorism in any form. Whether we are considering terrorism or non-proliferation, unless there is a non-selective, uniform and sustained approach, the objectives of the international community cannot be achieved. The outcome document reflects the joint resolve of the international community to fight terrorism. In our judgement, there is no institutional setting that is more capable than the United Nations of providing cohesion and vigour to those efforts.

As a victim of terrorism over the past two decades, India understands, and is fully supportive of, the need for United Nations action on counter-terrorism. A key aspect of the implementation of the outcome document will be the development and adoption by the General Assembly of a strong counter-terrorism agenda to supplement the existing General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on that issue. As an initiator of the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism, India welcomes, and is fully committed to, the decision taken by heads of State or Government to conclude negotiations on the convention during this session of the General Assembly.

The main purpose of the summit last week was to review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Unfortunately, most developing countries will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, given current growth rates and levels of international support. We must strengthen efforts at both the national and the international levels to take us closer to the development targets set out in the Millennium document.

The Millennium Development Goals embody a quantifiable vision of human dignity and solidarity, as well as of important economic and social rights. Yet, important objectives, such as employment, critical for developing countries, are excluded. India's use of innovative financial instruments for rural infrastructural investment, as well as our Rural Employment Guarantee Bill — recently passed in Parliament — I believe may be of interest to other developing countries.

Most of us had much higher expectations of the summit in the area of development, particularly in agreeing on a definite timetable for the achievement of the 0.7 per cent target for official development assistance. Unfortunately, that has not been achieved, and we have gone down to 0.5 per cent. That is equally true of innovative sources of financing because developing countries cannot break out of the cycle of poverty without enhanced resource flows and the application of science and technology to meet their developmental challenges.

As India's own economy develops — at about 8 per cent per year — and its technological advancement comes of age, we are expanding our economic and technical cooperation with the developing countries, reinforcing our political solidarity. We have extensive programmes in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world. We are also happy to have contributed to the South Fund for Development and Humanitarian Assistance. The India-Brazil-South Africa Facility for Alleviation of Poverty and Hunger is a good example of South-South cooperation.

India has written off the debts of all the highly indebted poor countries. Given India's long-term association with and commitment to Africa, we

welcome the recognition given by the High-level Plenary Meeting to the need to urgently address the special needs of our African brothers and sisters. On its part, India has undertaken several initiatives in partnership with Africa. The Techno-Economic Approach for Africa-India Movement initiative is designed to promote technology transfer to West Africa. The pivotal role of scientific knowledge and technology for economic development cannot be overstated. India stands ready to share its experience with the developing countries of Africa and elsewhere.

To bridge the digital divide within a country itself, which sometimes becomes as problematic as it is at the international level, wireless local loop technology developed in India, which eliminates expensive equipment and copper lines, has already been used in several countries in Africa. India has put together a connectivity mission in Africa, using fiber optics and dedicated satellite. It will support tele-education, telemedicine, e-commerce and e-governance, infotainment, resource mapping and meteorological services. India is also earmarking $1.5 billion for lines of credit to assist developing countries, in particular those in Africa, in fighting HIV/AIDS and other pandemics.

The international community needs to address intellectual property regimes that seek to deny technologies rather than facilitating their transfer to the developing countries, including in the areas of environment and public health.

Although both the Millennium Declaration and the outcome document have spoken of exploiting the beneficial aspects of globalization, we are yet to agree on and implement the modalities for such a process. Making the process of globalization fairer and more equitable remains one of the main challenges of our time. At present, the accumulation of wealth is accompanied by the accumulation of poverty. Ruskin, the nineteenth century British author, in his book *Unto this Last* — a favourite of Mahatma Gandhi — described such wealth as "the gilded index of a far-reaching ruin, a wrecker's pile of coin gleaned from a beach to which he has beguiled an argosy." Poverty is sometimes attributed to lack of entrepreneurship. The poor of the world prove their entrepreneurship every day by ensuring their families' physical survival.

Regrettably, the summit has not given a clear and comprehensive direction to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Round of trade negotiations. Formulas are not an end in themselves; the end has to be a decrease in poverty and an increase in employment. Therefore, equal treatment cannot be forced on unequal partners. Special and differential treatment remains an integral component of all trade negotiations, including agriculture and non-agricultural market access. India, as a member of the G-20, will continue to promote in the WTO and elsewhere the interests of all developing countries, including the small island developing States, the least developed, the landlocked and the highly indebted poor countries.

An achievement of the developing countries in the Group of 77 is their hard-fought and reasonably successful struggle for progress on systemic issues critical to good international economic governance. We have to build on that to ensure the reform of Bretton Woods institutions and the restoration of the central role of the United Nations in setting the international economic agenda.

A change in the composition of the Security Council is an imperative. The G-4 framework resolution has made United Nations reform a central issue that can no longer be ignored or disregarded. There is a democracy deficit, as the Secretary-General also said in July, in the governance of the United Nations. There is not much point in speaking of inclusiveness, transparency and democracy and leaving the Security Council as a glaring exception to those principles. Measures taken so far to revitalize the General Assembly are simply not enough. Only by electing permanent members committed to rendering unto the General Assembly what is the General Assembly's can that be done. That is essential for a world order in which decisions are optimal and therefore acceptable, and the use of force minimal.

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, aptly stated: "Above all, we have to participate in the growing structure of a world order. We cannot rely on others to do it on our behalf." One cannot argue in favour of democracy in the rest of the world and leave the Security Council undemocratic. Effectiveness is a function of right decisions with broad support. Negotiations on the outcome document and many subsequent statements have demonstrated that, if more could not be achieved on the development aspects of trade in the document, it is because the Security Council has not been made representative. If institutional reform has been faltering and many are

doubtful of securing a just solution, it is because the Security Council does not reflect the world of today. It reflects the world of 1945.

The unsatisfactory progress on other issues shows that critics of Security Council expansion in both the categories were profoundly mistaken. Security Council reform, far from hindering progress, was actually helping it. In its absence, fears of intervention have prevented agreement on a human rights council and other issues. Therefore, Security Council reform remains more necessary than ever and should preferably, as the Secretary-General has said, be completed by the end of the year. That should be our main priority; I doubt if it is. Security Council reform is not about any country's prestige or power, but about transforming the balance of power in the world. Our experience in India from the freedom movement to present times shows that diversity is a source of strength and effectiveness. The same would be true of a reformed Security Council. We would continue also to engage actively in the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, the restructuring of the Secretariat and the setting-up of peacebuilding commission.

As we observe the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, I am reminded once again of the words of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who said at this very forum 45 years ago:

> "During these past fifteen years the United Nations has often been criticized for its structure and for some of its activities. These criticisms have had some justification behind them, but looking at the broad picture I think that we can definitely say that the United Nations has amply justified its existence and repeatedly prevented our recurrent crises from developing into war. It has played a great role, and it is a little difficult now to think of this troubled world without the United Nations." (*A/PV.882*, para. 110)

In the life of individuals as well as of institutions, the completion of 60 years is a significant moment for stocktaking — certainly in my part of the world. Even as we reflect upon the functioning of this institution since its inception in 1945, all of us gathered here look forward to the realization of new hopes, aspirations and, indeed, to a rejuvenated United Nations which is fully geared to meet the myriad challenges of our times and effectively contribute to the well-being and development of humanity at large and to manage change.

The vision which we have for a better world is best described in the words of a great son of India, the great poet Rabindranath Tagore, who was the first Asian to be awarded the Nobel Prize in literature. I shall end my statement by quoting a very famous text of his:

> "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
> Where knowledge is free
> Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls
> Where words come out from the depth of truth
> Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
> Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
> Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
> Where the mind is led forward by thee
> into ever-widening thought and action
> Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake."

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hassan Wirajuda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia.

Mr. Wirajuda (Indonesia): We live in an age of unpredictable threats, against which there may be no airtight security measures. Tragedy could strike in the form of a deadly epidemic. It could be the handiwork of terrorists, like the attacks against New York City on 11 September 2001 or the Bali bombings of 2002. It could be a convulsion of nature, like the tsunami that demolished the Indonesian province of Aceh and nearby Indian Ocean Rim areas, or the storm tide that drowned New Orleans and much of Louisiana recently.

On the tragedy of New Orleans, we extend our deepest condolences to the American people.

We Indonesians know too well the enormous suffering that a natural catastrophe can bring. In Aceh alone, the tsunami of 26 December 2004 killed outright some 130,000 individuals. It destroyed 220,000 homes and displaced 572,000 individuals. Some 100,000 persons are still missing and presumed dead. The death toll would have been higher were it not for the quick and vigorous response of the international community and the United Nations. For that, the Indonesian people

are deeply grateful. The outpouring of sympathy and solidarity, as well as humanitarian assistance from all over the world, deeply touched us.

Eleven days after the tragedy, we hosted in Jakarta a special summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami. At that summit, world leaders and the United Nations Secretary-General, as well as representatives of multilateral institutions, worked out a system of coordination and division of labour in attending to the stricken countries. Pledges were made of urgently needed assistance. A decision was reached to develop a multi-nodal early warning system covering the Indian Ocean Rim countries. Within ASEAN, an agreement to establish stand-by arrangements to mitigate natural disasters was concluded last July. Those efforts were reflected in General Assembly resolution 59/233, initiated by ASEAN and sponsored by more than 130 United Nations Members.

The reconstruction and rehabilitation of Aceh got off to an early start as the emergency relief phase was completed ahead of schedule. A master plan for reconstruction and rehabilitation was then devised. An agency for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Aceh was established and given broad powers. Through the World Bank's Multi-Donor Trust Fund and bilateral mechanisms with donors, we have instituted a strict system that guarantees transparency and accountability in the disbursement of funds.

Rehabilitation and development, however, cannot run smoothly without peace. And for many years there has been no peace. Before the tsunami, Aceh saw three decades of armed conflict caused by perceived economic injustices. Many Acehnese felt that they were not being given a fair deal by the central Government. As the conflict raged and took a heavy toll on human life, a vicious cycle was at work: violence impoverished the people, and in their poverty many resorted to violence.

In the spirit of reform and in a democratic environment, efforts to address the problem of Aceh through dialogue and reconciliation were initiated in 2000. Those efforts led to the signing of a final agreement in Helsinki last month. That was the silver lining in the cloud of 26 December; it opened the eyes of both sides to the hopelessness of the situation without peace.

It helps that there is international support for the peace process. At our invitation, the European Union and ASEAN contributing countries have provided monitors for the implementation of the peace agreement. In a way, it has created a precedent for the collaboration of two regional organizations in peacebuilding.

The decommissioning and destruction of rebel weapons are working according to the peace agreement. The former rebels are back in the fold of the unitary Republic of Indonesia and are fighting on the same side as the Government in the struggle against poverty.

Peace and development in Aceh are the fruits of reform and democratization, which are pervading all of Indonesia. Starting this year, all local officials, governors, regents and mayors are directly elected by the people. Whereas the former rebel leaders once sought power through the bullet, they can now seek their legitimate aspirations through the ballot.

Since 1998, we have enhanced our political institutions through constitutional amendments. We have overhauled our legal system, and we are adopting high standards of good governance in the corporate and public sector. We have pursued vigorous campaigns against corruption.

We are now pursuing an economic strategy that is pro-growth, pro-poor and pro-job. We are strengthening the export sector, promoting investments to create jobs and speeding up rural economic development. In a few weeks, we will put in place a social safety net that will cushion the impact of high oil prices on the poor. We are on target with our Millennium Development Goals on poverty reduction.

Wherever there is social unrest in Indonesia, we bring justice and foster dialogue and reconciliation, as we did in Aceh.

In the same spirit of reconciliation, Indonesia and neighbouring Timor-Leste have reached out to each other so that both nations might together close a painful chapter in our shared history. Together, we have established a commission of truth and friendship, tasked to bring about exposure of the truth and acknowledgement of responsibility for the human rights violations committed prior to and immediately after the popular consultations held in Timor-Leste in 1999. The commission started its work last August.

The fledgling democracies of the two countries stand a better of chance of succeeding if they work together in a spirit of reconciliation, friendship and cooperation, complementing the prosecutorial justice that has been carried out in Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

With our other closest neighbours in South-East Asia, we are striving hard to become an ASEAN community that is at peace with itself and all others — a prosperous ASEAN living in harmony within the community of caring societies that we have long envisioned. We hope to see ASEAN play a pivotal role in the evolution of a new equilibrium in the Asia-Pacific region that will consolidate the peaceful engagement of regional Powers with one another. Today, ASEAN already serves as the driving force towards the development of an East Asian economic community.

We Indonesians love to build bridges. Last April, we served as host to the representatives of 106 Asian and African countries, many of them heads of State or Government, for the Asian-African Summit of 2005. During that historic Summit, we put in place the cornerstone for a bridge of cooperation across the Indian Ocean — the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership — on behalf of the 4.6 billion people of the two continents. Through the Partnership, both continents will intensify their political solidarity, economic cooperation and socio-cultural relations, including technical cooperation and human resources development.

The establishment of the Partnership was the most meaningful way in which we could observe the Golden Jubilee of the 1955 Asian-African Conference held in Bandung, which heralded the emergence of many new sovereign nations from the shadow of colonialism. In those formative years of ours, we sought to reform international relations through the United Nations.

Today, we feel called upon to seek reform of the United Nations itself, for we are faced with the formidable challenges of development, security and human rights — three challenges that are interlinked and interdependent and that cannot be addressed separately. We therefore need a United Nations that is more effective and efficient and more democratic and accountable to its Members — an Organization with a balanced focus on those three challenges.

We need a reformed Security Council that is more democratically representative. As the Asia-Pacific region is home to more than half of the human race and is the cradle of ancient civilizations and religions, we in Indonesia feel that it should have more seats on the Council. Moreover, we must do away with the right of the veto.

We cannot afford to exclude global disarmament and non-proliferation from our agenda. We are not rid of the danger of nuclear annihilation. At the same time, developing countries must be allowed to engage in the peaceful use of nuclear energy to hasten their development.

We need a Peacebuilding Commission to help countries in conflict make the transition from war to durable peace. The Commission must work in coordination with the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, under the mandate of the General Assembly.

With regard to the fight against terrorism, we hope that a comprehensive convention can be concluded soon. International cooperation to address this problem should include efforts to deal with its root causes. We also hold that no human right may be sacrificed and that no international law may be violated in the fight against terrorism.

We in Indonesia believe that interfaith dialogue and cooperation to empower moderate voices can significantly reduce violent radicalism. That is why we have sponsored and hosted Asia-Pacific and Asian-European dialogues on interfaith cooperation.

We urge that the Economic and Social Council be empowered to effectively review and coordinate international cooperation for development.

The envisaged Human Rights Council must uphold human rights as universal, indivisible and interdependent. It should be free from politicization and double standards; instead, it should promote dialogue as well as concrete cooperation. It should be a subsidiary body to the General Assembly.

Finally, no effort aimed at United Nations reform can be complete unless it affirms and makes a reality the central role of the General Assembly as the main deliberative body of the United Nations.

It may not be realistic to hope that these reforms will be realized this week or in the months to come. We

the Members of the United Nations are not sufficiently in concert to achieve an early breakthrough. But we who desire reform must keep faith and persevere.

For three decades, armed conflict smouldered in Aceh, until it became clear to both sides that the only way out of a tragic situation was the way of peace. For more than three decades, Indonesian reformists struggled against the crushing weight of an authoritarian regime, until it became clear that our only way out of the Asian crisis was through democratic reform.

We do not know when the moment of truth will come for the United Nations. We hope that it will come, not in the wake of a crisis, but at the dawning of a more enlightened time. Above all, we must never lose hope in the Organization's capacity for reform, its perfectibility. We must keep on working — even harder than before. Then, when the moment of truth comes, we will be ready to seize the opportunity.

The President: I am sure we all agree that there is special reason to think about the country that was hardest hit by the tsunami, with 130,000 drowned and 100,000 missing. I wanted to say that because I believe we all felt a sense of solidarity and compassion in that connection.

I now call on His Excellency Mr. Dimitrij Rupel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia.

Mr. Rupel (Slovenia) (*spoke in Slovenian; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I would like to express to you the full support of the Republic of Slovenia as you carry out that extremely important and responsible task. May you have much vision, courage and resolve as you preside over the General Assembly during this anniversary year.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil), Vice-President, took the Chair.

At the same time, Sir, I would like to express our sincere recognition and gratitude for the efforts of your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, President at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. His determined leadership, his insight into the current issues of the modern world and his enduring courage enabled him to guide the General Assembly in its sixtieth year, which promises to be a year of the greatest significance for the future of the Organization.

We have assembled here to consider together in good faith how we should respond to the challenges of modern times and how our Organization should be adapted to the needs of the twenty-first century. We are here to act on the basis of our best understanding and our belief in the achievements of creative development for the well-being of the people of the modern world, to quote, Sir, your illustrious compatriot, Dag Hammarskjöld.

The outcome document contains numerous meaningful and useful ideas. That document's purpose is to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations and consolidate its mission in the modern world. The reform of the Organization is of the utmost importance and was initiated at the right moment. This is a time of change for several international organizations and institutions. All are certainly aware of the current transformation of the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Such changes are difficult. We encounter obstacles such as the rejection of the European Constitutional Treaty in two referendums.

The effectiveness of the machinery and the mission of the United Nations should also be improved through the creation of the Human Rights Council and the fight against terrorism. There were many discussions and diverging views on those two questions in relation to the outcome document. However, we cannot be successful if we have difficulty even defining terrorism or establishing the Human Rights Council. There is some indecisiveness in the outcome document in that respect. With respect to terrorism, the document speaks of dialogue and understanding among civilizations. With respect to the Human Rights Council, the outcome document proposes holding further negotiations to establish, among other things, its mandate and working methods.

In today's world, change and certainty are closely connected and interdependent. Attaining a balance between them involves values, rules, laws and the institutions of human dignity, equality and democracy — in short, human rights.

The fact is, we live in a globalized and interdependent world in which we all are responsible for our security. It is significant that the outcome document warns that there can be no development without security and no security without development, and that both development and security depend to a

great degree on respect for human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

Many efforts have been made to address the sources of suffering in the world. United Nations Member States must continue to support efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals. Twenty-five European Union (EU) member States committed themselves to the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) to official development assistance by 2015. In that context, Slovenia, one of the 10 new EU members and a new donor, committed itself to attaining the target of 0.33 per cent of GDP for development aid. We underline the need for the long-term commitment and responsibility of all countries in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

We are continuously surprised at the changing nature of the threats facing each and every country. The concept of security includes both State security and the security of the individual. Thus, it is important to effectively address various issues, in particular disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as the problem of the proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons, which affects numerous countries. We are rather disappointed that the outcome document does not include provisions on non-proliferation and disarmament, and we hope that work on those issues will continue after the summit.

Terrorist attacks on innocent people fundamentally contradict the value systems of modern countries, in particular human rights, as formulated and stated in international conventions and declarations. Terrorist attacks are a violation of human rights, which are the foundation of modern societies; they represent an assault on the very essence of those societies and thus negate their very modernity. This negation is connected with the complex and paradoxical nature of the concept of modernity. It seems that the fundamental frustration caused by this complex and paradoxical nature drives terrorists to commit radical actions. Terrorism cannot tolerate the complex and paradoxical character of modern societies.

Measures in the fight against terrorism are aimed at those whose actions deny and reject human rights as a fundamental value of modern societies. By examining terrorists' attitudes and the meaning of terrorism, we should be able to define terrorism. An agreed definition of terrorism would provide clarity and help better ensure human rights. The more fully human rights are protected, the more successful we will be in our fight against terrorism. Human rights will be more fully protected when terrorism is without protection. Tolerating or justifying terrorism undermines human rights.

That does not mean, however, that we can fail to respect human rights in waging our fight against terrorism. It is precisely universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including in the fight against terrorism, that will ensure the success of that fight and preserve the democratic and free principles of those societies which are being targeted by terrorists.

Slovenia welcomes the affirmation of the principle of the responsibility to protect. By endorsing that principle, world leaders have made a conceptual breakthrough in the prevention of future tragedies like those of Srebrenica, Rwanda and Darfur. For the first time, we have recognized our national and collective responsibility to act in cases of genocide and ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Slovenia considers the responsibility to protect to be an integral part of national responsibility to protect a country's people against atrocities. It is our understanding that the Security Council shares the responsibility to protect and that the use of the veto in the Council is fundamentally incompatible with that responsibility.

We welcome the establishment of a Democracy Fund and intend to contribute to it. We strongly support a strengthened role for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The strengthened role of the Office, to be financed from the United Nations regular budget, is good news for the realization of human rights on the ground.

The level of agreement on the Human Rights Council is a disappointment. Numerous countries wanted and expected more. Unfortunately, for the moment, we are left without the necessary vision of a new Council, even though, in the preparations for the summit, we formulated good proposals for the Council's structure and mandate.

Slovenia wants a standing Council that is a principal organ of the United Nations, able to deal with all human rights concerns in all countries at all times. We want a Council that better addresses rights and freedoms, without double standards. We want a

Council that could convene and act in every instance of massive violation of human rights. We want a Council able to make recommendations to other organs and agencies of the United Nations system so that human rights are truly integrated in all areas of the Organization. Finally, we want a Council that reflects the diversity of the modern world and that gives a proper voice to civil society through non-governmental organizations. In the course of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, Slovenia will continue to actively support the establishment of a strong and efficient new Human Rights Council.

I have already mentioned the dialogue of civilizations. That dialogue should be based on universal, fundamental values. No differentiation between "us" and "them" should be tolerated. Human rights and fundamental freedoms are the manifestation of our common fundamental values. They are the best answer for ensuring a dignified life in our globalized, fast-paced and increasingly unsafe world. On the basis of our wealth of traditions and history and creative diversity, all individuals should be informed of and be able to realize their rights and freedoms, as this is the best long-term foundation for peace and development. Educating people about human rights and dignity is a prerequisite for this goal, and we are thrilled to see that the need for such education is properly reflected in the outcome document. As a member State of the Human Security Network we are pleased that the issue of human security has been included in the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting and will continue to be discussed in the General Assembly.

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations deserves our priority attention in future. As experiences from a variety of geographic environments and conditions have shown — in particular in South-Eastern Europe and Africa — synergetic cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations can be very effective.

As Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), I call for the elaboration of a binding framework for permanent cooperation between the United Nations and that important regional organization as soon as possible. For 30 years now, OSCE has proved effective in very sensitive regions of the world. This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, which established OSCE. Thirty years ago, the integration of East and West began. Today, our main duty is to integrate civilizations. One of the areas that should be further developed is strengthening dialogue among civilizations. It may be that the supreme importance of our outcome document rests on that dialogue.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Norman José Caldera Cardenal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua.

Mr. Caldera Cardenal (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): The struggle for democracy being waged by Nicaragua has transcended our borders, arousing feelings of solidarity and support in different parts of the world. The Nicaraguan people raised their voice and they were heard by Central America. From there, with the added strength of the seven fraternal countries that joined it, that voice resounded throughout the Andean Community, Mexico, the United States of America, Canada, the Rio Group, the Organization of American States (OAS), the European Union and Japan, to mention only the most recent cases. Indeed, the echo of that voice has reverberated at the United Nations in various reports and resolutions.

From this rostrum in the General Assembly Hall, I would like to convey to Member States the deep gratitude of the Nicaraguan people for the solidarity they have shown to us.

We come to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly at a turning point for our future, for we are in the throes of a struggle for democracy, a struggle to keep us from returning to our dark days and make them a thing of the past. Like the peoples of other United Nations Members who have fought for their freedom, thousands of Nicaraguans have died for it, victims of a perverse pendulum that swung from authoritarianism to totalitarianism. The lessons learned in those years left us a legacy that acknowledges the supreme value of freedom, democracy and, above all, peace.

Over the past four years, we have been striving for national revitalization and institutional overhaul based on transparency, freedom, the rule of law, social equality and individual initiative.

To carry out that Herculean task, we needed to overcome the errors of the past. That is why, with support from the rest of our continent, we have engaged in a frontal attack on corruption and impunity. We have also attempted to restore independence and integrity to our institutions, held hostage by private and partisan interests. Those efforts include the legal

sphere, where the absolute impartiality and objectivity of judges and magistrates, as well as an inclusive electoral system capable of ensuring respect for a popular vote cast in freedom, are imperative. It also requires that institutions act in the service of the higher interests of the nation and do not become weapons in political vendettas, used in campaigns to intimidate public officials in the executive branch.

The forces conniving to oppose democracy responded by escalating the breakdown in the constitutional order and the legitimate exercise of power. They then attempted to upset the balance of power, an essential principal of representative democracy in the inter-American system. The opposition attempted to execute a new type of coup d'état, corrupting State institutions by using them as instruments of political coercion. Instead of accepting the separation of powers, they appropriated the distribution of power, attempting to modify the powers of the President retroactively without consulting the Nicaraguan people. Only the Nicaraguan people can confer national sovereignty and presidential power, as they did at the polls in November 2001.

In the light of those threats to democracy, we have harnessed all our available resources under national legislation and international law. The Central American Court of Justice, the judicial arm of the Central American Integration System and rooted in democratic values, handed down a far-reaching decision on 29 March 2005 recognizing the separation of powers as a democratic principle. Under the Inter-American Democratic Charter, we also turned to the Organization of American States, which affirmed that the disturbing turn of events in Nicaragua was compromising the balance of power and the Government's legitimate exercise of power.

To overcome that situation, President Enrique Bolaños has expressed his continuing willingness to launch a broad national dialogue with all sectors. This does not mean, however — as the forces attempting to destroy our institutions have claimed — a dialogue aimed at surrendering democracy. Nor should it be a dialogue in which a gun is held to the President's head to force him to make concessions that would lead to a new type of dictatorship in Nicaragua — one never before seen in the history of Latin America — one that would bring back the trials and tribulations of earlier years and put an end to freedom and dash the democratic hopes of the Nicaraguan people and all nations. On the contrary, as the Organization of American States itself has said in its resolutions, it is a dialogue aimed at seeking democratic solutions, free from pressure, threats and coercion, and aimed at the cessation of any actions that could exacerbate the crisis and prevent the restoration of the balance of power.

We deplore the murder of journalists in any part of the world. In particular, we are concerned by the murders of three Nicaraguan journalists that took place over the past three years. We are concerned not only because the criminals cut short precious human lives, but also because the murders came at the height of the electoral campaign and constituted an attempt to terrorize our journalists and suppress freedom of expression in our young democracy. By attacking freedom of expression, they are harming the democratic processes. Those forces are well aware that freedom of expression is the voice of democracy. Freedom of expression protects all the other fundamental rights; without it, freedom loses its sustenance and democracy is orphaned.

We will continue doing our utmost to punish the guilty and break up all networks of terror and intimidation.

We are aware of the importance of the upcoming electoral processes for democracy in Nicaragua. Under the present circumstances, we must guarantee the Nicaraguan people that every vote will be duly registered, counted and respected, and that their sacred right to elect their authorities in conditions of absolute freedom will not be violated. As a result, we have asked the Secretary-General for technical assistance from the United Nations specialized agencies to help us hold elections and strengthen our democracy, complementing the work being carried out by the Organization of American States with assistance of the European Union.

Despite the energy, resources and efforts diverted from development in order to preserve democracy, Nicaragua has made major strides towards fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals. Destabilizing actions have not stopped the Nicaraguan people from beginning to enjoy the first fruits of the war against corruption and to benefit from an honest and transparent civil service that has succeeded in attracting foreign investment and winning the confidence of the international community.

The latest gauge of President Bolaños's success in enabling more and more Nicaraguans to lead a decent life can be found in the Human Development Report 2005, which states that we have progressed from the 118th to the 112th position. The best medium-term strategy for sustainable poverty reduction is to gain access to new markets and make international trade the driving force of growth, combining economic growth with social development in order to develop our human capital.

The Government of Nicaragua is promoting ratification of the Central American Free Trade Agreement between Central America, the Dominican Republic and the United States of America, which seeks to strengthen our economy, integrate us into the world and raise our population's standard of living, particularly that of the poorest sectors.

We welcomed with hope the words of President Bush in his statement to this Assembly:

> "A successful Doha Round will reduce and eliminate tariffs and other barriers on farm and industrial goods. It will end unfair agricultural subsidies ... Under Doha, every nation will gain — and the developing world stands to gain the most." (A/60/PV.2, p. 8)

May that be the case.

I am pleased to announce that in accordance with the request made by the heads of State and Government of the Central American Integration System to President Vicente Fox of Mexico on 12 September, we are today sending his Government the information that will make it possible to explore innovative finance mechanisms to help our countries deal with the crisis caused by the international price of oil.

Poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon associated with economic and structural problems. The reduction of unemployment and social inequality and the expansion of social investment are determining factors for human development: in other words, sustainable economic growth within a democratic framework based on social and gender equality.

The Government of Nicaragua is carrying out social programmes to protect the rights and satisfy the basic needs of the most vulnerable sectors of Nicaraguan society — women, children, young people, the elderly and persons with disabilities. This protection extends to Nicaraguans abroad.

We reaffirm our priority commitment to promoting respect for the dignity of all our migrants, who, with their work and their efforts, contribute to socio-economic development that of their host country and that of their home country.

A duty of justice and solidarity moves Nicaragua to raise its voice in support of the just and legitimate aspiration of the Republic of China on Taiwan to become a member of the universal forum of the United Nations. The more than 20 million nationals of that country deserve to be regarded as an integral part of the peoples of the United Nations.

Nicaragua is grateful to the Central American Integration System for endorsing our candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2006-2007 term, reflecting the right of countries with small economies to be represented on an equal footing. At a time of reform of the Organization, Nicaragua is also grateful for the significant support it has received thus far and affirms its resolve to continue seeking the support of all Member States.

We hope to be elected and to share our experience in areas such as peacekeeping and peacebuilding and to support the just aspiration of developing countries to participate fully in decisions concerning security, with all the responsibility, benefits and consequences that that implies.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ali Rodríguez Araque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Rodríguez Araque (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the end of the first five years of the third millennium, this Organization must go through a phase of maturity after sixty years of life, enough time to have formed a collective understanding of the major problems still facing mankind and to find the most effective ways to address them. Recent facts show that this is the reality that we shall have to deal with for some time in the future.

There are many challenges facing the United Nations, both internal and global problems. By way of illustration, I should like to refer to two of those challenges: one internal, namely, the much-needed democratization of this Organization and the other external, the problem of poverty, which is the most important, growing and alarming problem of

contemporary society. I should like to invite all delegations to give these two problems careful thought.

Democracy, at the current stage of human development, is the highest form of political organization. Democracy, owing to its very nature and as a vital condition, implies the equal exercise of rights as the ideal way to reach the best possible living conditions. What is valid for one country taken individually applies even more to organizations in which many sovereign nations are represented, all with equal rights.

The United Nations is the most emblematic case in the modern society of nations. As a result, it should be the true embodiment and example of the equal exercise of democratic rights. If we agree on this basic principle, one question immediately comes to mind: is this Organization a democratic institution? Are its practices useful, as we have seen in very recent decisions adopted by a small number of Members in a document presented in the first meeting? Is this a useful example of a transparent democratic exercise on the part of the sovereign nations represented here?

The answer, regrettably, is a resounding "no". On the contrary, what we have seen is a dangerous process in which oligarchies are being built, where a small group of countries usurp the right to take decisions without taking into account the vast majority of countries that ultimately represent the overwhelming majority of the global population. This is what usually happens with matters affecting the fate of billions of human beings.

For those reasons, when we talk about reform, the first thing to do is to define the nature of this reform, which can have no other goal than the democratization of this Organization. That means giving decision-making power in fundamental matters to the General Assembly and ending once and for all the Organization's oligarchic and, very often, autocratic practices, which diminish its authority in the eyes of the world.

In our humble but firm opinion, this is the major challenge the Organization faces internally. Its very existence depends on the successful resolution of this issue. We have no doubt about that, and let us not doubt it.

In the external sphere, the most important challenge lies in the agonizing escalation that daily traps millions of human beings living in poverty. Poverty — as we have heard here in many statements — is the result of an unjust system of distribution of the earthly goods of men that therefore denies men any spiritual value. It is an unfair system of distribution that stems from a distorted matrix whose dominant force is a ruthless thirst for profit and in which growing wealth is based on the expansion and deepening of poverty. This is the reality that we see day after day, not only, to the surprise of many, in the so-called poor countries, but also in countries where opulence is obscenely on display, every second, through the mass media, attracting millions of people who are trying to improve their living conditions, only to crash into a wall raised by those who preach market freedom and the free movement of capital but who do not tolerate the movement of human beings except when they are needed as a labour force to further expand their wealth.

This is the painful truth that the tragedy of Katrina has revealed. It is a painful reality that has profoundly shaken all of those for whom nothing about human beings is strange, wherever it may occur.

These problems should have become the focal points of the entire document that was approved in a strange "consensus" — a word I do not hesitate to place between quotation marks. Little attention has been paid to this drama. But the drama is there; it is boiling across the world. That generates instability, because if there is one thing that human society is not made for, it is suicide. It seeks desperate forms of survival, and that is why, as the great Peruvian Cesar Vallejo said once, it lights its captive torch and prays angrily. These are days of suffering but also days of anger in many parts of the world, and that generates instability. If we want stability in the world, let us apply social justice, a new system of distribution among regions and a new system of solidarity for distribution within nations that cannot be limited to charity or assistance often delivered under humiliating conditions.

There are many ideas that bring us to this meeting, I am sure. On some of the most important problems we have already defined our position in previous statements. We will continue doing so in this session. For the time being, we would simply add a basic item: how difficult it is to realize man's democratic dream when man finds himself prevented from satisfying his most basic conditions for a life of

dignity: health, nutrition, a roof over his head and the opportunity to enjoy basic rights.

We trust in the wisdom of the peoples and the new leadership that through its voice speaks for silent millions. We trust in the struggle of those who, as the great Martí said, have thrown in their lot with the poor of the earth. Thus some day, in the not-so-distant future, we will find ourselves in a better world, with a life worth living and a United Nations strengthened by the essential values of men and women of dignity, who are the majority on this planet.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Abdulla Al-Rumaihi, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Rumaihi (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure at the outset to extend to you, Mr. President, our congratulations upon your election to the presidency of this sixtieth session of the General Assembly. We wish you every success in discharging your functions. I would also like to extend thanks and appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, for his valuable efforts in conducting the work of the Assembly's fifty-ninth session, especially his efforts to reach a consensus on the final document of the world summit of 2005.

I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his tireless efforts to strengthen the role of our international Organization.

World leaders who met at United Nations Headquarters to follow up on the outcome of the Millennium Summit and the coordinated and integrated implementation and follow-up of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the social, economic and related fields have managed to adopt a document that calls for implementing reforms in the United Nations and for taking bolder collective steps to combat poverty, achieve development, establish international security and uphold human rights.

The world today is experiencing extremely difficult economic conditions which pose a real threat to the process of social and economic development in the developing countries, especially the least developed countries, and pose a major threat to the development of their peoples. That situation is the result of such factors as a decline in official development assistance; unfair international terms of trade; the imposition of restrictions on the access of their exports to world markets; unfair prices for their commodity exports; a heavy external debt burden; and the adverse effects of globalization.

Despite the progress made in many fields of international cooperation, the problems of hunger, poverty and such diseases as AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis have taken on horrific dimensions and continue to pose major challenges to the international community. Unless the latter makes concerted efforts to accelerate equitable development in the developing countries, especially the least developed countries, the Millennium Goal of halving poverty by 2015 will remain elusive.

The international community, by resolving, at the Millennium Summit, to declare war on poverty by launching an ongoing campaign to make the right to development a reality for all peoples, has made an implicit commitment to creating a social, economic and political environment in the developing countries, especially the least developed countries, that would be more favourable to the translation into concrete reality of the right to development for all of their peoples. That would provide cohesion and equitable social integration for their societies as well as a real opportunity to eradicate poverty, enabling them to enjoy full, productive and gainful employment. The international community also resolved at the Millennium Summit to seek to achieve a fair and just globalization that embraces everyone, in order to spare the developing countries, especially the least developed countries, the danger of being marginalized within the international economy.

At the Millennium Summit, world leaders affirmed that international cooperation was the most important factor in making the world a better place to live in. They also affirmed that free trade, liberalization of the economy and interdependence are the best means to accelerate equitable economic development in the developing countries.

The international community is at a critical stage of the negotiations related to the Doha Development Agenda. Those negotiations made concrete progress last year in some difficult and controversial areas. Agreement was reached on the launching of negotiations regarding the question of trade concessions, one of the four questions which were left,

by agreement, outside the scope of the Doha Programme of Action: investment, competition, trade and environment and trade concessions. However, that agreement by the developed countries was, regrettably, conditional on the non-holding of negotiations on the other three questions.

We are looking forward to the achievement of solid, ambitious progress at the sixth World Trade Organization Conference in Hong Kong, and we hope that we will be able to conclude negotiations in 2006.

The developing countries have fulfilled their pledges, and we hope that the upcoming negotiations regarding the implementation of the outcome of this summit will translate into reality the global partnership for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. We hope that the right to development will become a living reality and that the developed countries will honour their pledges, including increasing official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product, and will accelerate the process of forgiving the external debt of all poor countries.

We have often stated that peace in the Middle East can be achieved only through the implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council and of the General Assembly. All of those resolutions recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among which is the right to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent State on their national soil, with Al-Quds as its capital; withdrawal from the occupied Golan Heights up to the border of 4 June 1967; and full withdrawal from the rest of the Lebanese territories still under occupation.

On that basis, the international mediation process produced the road map, which affirms the principle of land for peace and calls for the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories and the establishment of the State of Palestine.

The Arab summit, meeting in Beirut in March 2002, endorsed an international initiative calling for the normalization of relations between the Arab States and Israel in return for Israel's withdrawal to the 1967 border.

The Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip is an important and positive first step, which, we hope, will be followed by similar steps in all the Palestinian territories and the other occupied Arab territories, in accordance with internationally binding resolutions and the relevant initiatives and agreements, in order to bring about stability, security and a comprehensive and just peace for all States and peoples of the region.

I cannot fail to mention the difficult conditions experienced by the fraternal Iraqi people. We hope that the new constitution will embody the hopes and aspirations of the Iraqi people and contribute to the establishment of security and stability in the country. We hope also that it will take into consideration the interests of all segments of the Iraqi population, that all the people will feel that they all are part of the established system, and that the unity and the national identity of Iraq will be preserved.

Believing as it does in the great importance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to international peace and security, the State of Qatar has acceded to the Treaty and calls from this rostrum on all States to do so. It also seeks to transform the Middle East region into a zone that is totally free from all kinds of weapons of mass destruction.

My country has unambiguously condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. It has also supported all Security Council resolutions related to the question of terrorism, and it has cooperated with the international community in implementing those agreements. However, we feel that success in eradicating that phenomenon requires that we deal with its underlying causes, including the social, economic and political aspects that provide a fertile breeding ground for terrorism.

We also support the idea of convening an international conference on terrorism and of drawing up an international strategy to combat it. In that context, we feel that defining terrorism and clearly distinguishing it from the struggle waged by peoples in exercise of their legitimate right to defend their freedom and enjoy self-determination must be the most important norm and enjoy international consensus. This is a right that is enshrined in all international norms and practices.

Our world today more than ever needs a comprehensive authority and frame of reference that is qualified to perform its role as an international instrument; one that seeks to achieve international cooperation in resolving international problems of a social and economic nature, as well as consolidating security and stability, maintaining international peace,

and enhancing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. Moreover, we must earnestly seek to respect this global diversity, protect it and allow it to prosper.

Hence, we feel that the proposal to establish a standing Human Rights Council, with a smaller membership, to be elected by a two-thirds majority only, merits further study in serious intergovernmental negotiations, with a view to achieving consensus on the establishment of the proposed Council, its membership, its mandate, and the organ destined to be its parent body, which we hope will be the General Assembly. We must commit ourselves to human rights, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and we must fully comply with internationally recognized human rights standards.

The question of expanding the Security Council and the concept of collective security require further study and intergovernmental negotiations so as to arrive at a consensus on these important questions.

In this context, we support the Secretary-General on the question of reforming the United Nations Secretariat for the reasons indicated in his report entitled "In Larger Freedom". However, we feel that any proposals to reform the Secretariat are extremely important and must be the subject of careful study, discussion and negotiation by the General Assembly.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Several representatives have indicated their wish to exercise the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the possible second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Williams (United Kingdom): I am taking the floor in right of reply to the remarks made yesterday by His Excellency Mr. Rafael Bielsa, Minister for Foreign Relations, International Trade and Worship of the Argentine Republic, on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands.

The United Kingdom's position on this issue is well known and was last set out in detail by the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Sir Emyr Jones Parry, in a written right of reply to the statement by His Excellency President Néstor Carlos Kirchner of the Argentine Republic in the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on 14 September 2005.

The United Kingdom has no doubts about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. There can be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until such time as the islanders so wish.

Mr. Alaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): This morning the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates made some unacceptable claims against the territorial integrity of my country.

As we have clearly and repeatedly placed on record our position on this issue on previous occasions, I do not need to go into detail. The Islamic Republic of Iran is fully committed to its international obligations, especially those arising from the Memorandum of Understanding of 1971. We firmly believe that misunderstandings over the interpretation or application of that Memorandum of Understanding, if any, should be addressed with goodwill and through mutually agreed mechanisms in order to find an acceptable solution.

Meanwhile, my Government has always welcomed the interaction and exchange of views between officials of Iran and the United Arab Emirates on issues of interest and concern to both our countries. We believe that dialogue between our two Governments can play a determining role in removing any existing misunderstandings.

Mr. Desmoures (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): With respect to what has been said by the representative of the United Kingdom on the question of the Malvinas Islands, the delegation of Argentina reiterates in full the statement that was made yesterday by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina before this Assembly. In this respect, let it be recalled that, as was determined by the United Nations on several occasions, the form of putting an end to the dispute over the sovereignty, referring to the question of the Malvinas Islands, is only through bilateral negotiations between the Governments of the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom.

Argentina reiterates its willingness to undertake such negotiations.

Mr. Al-Mazroui (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): With regard to the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Iran's occupation of the three islands of the United Arab Emirates, I would merely state that the United Arab Emirates, which has repeatedly expressed its principled and firm position on this national issue, wishes to express its extreme disappointment over the false claims made by the Iranian representative. Those claims reflect the illegitimate behaviour of the Iranian Government, which ignores all the historical, legal and demographic facts that prove these three islands — the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa — fall under the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates.

The United Arab Emirates would like to reiterate that the Iranian presence in these United Arab Emirates islands since 1971 is an illegal military occupation and in form and content violates the tenets of all international relations, the United Nations Charter and relevant international law. It must therefore be removed.

I also wish to reiterate the words of our Foreign Minister in a speech today, who called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to reconsider the policy of occupying the islands and to respond in a serious manner to the peace initiatives that have been proposed by the Government of the United Arab Emirates in order to settle this issue peacefully, either through bilateral and constructive, peaceful negotiations that would remedy the reasons for this crisis, or by referring it to the International Court of Justice and abiding by the Court's legal decision in order to guarantee a just, comprehensive and lasting solution; this would strengthen good-neighbourly ties and cooperation between our two countries and peoples and consolidate stability, security, peace and development in the Arabian Gulf area.

The Acting President: We have heard the speakers in their exercise of the right of reply.

Organization of work

The Acting President: I would like to inform members that the meeting of the General Assembly to consider the first report of the General Committee, document A/60/250, originally scheduled for this evening, has been postponed until tomorrow, 20 September, in the evening, immediately following the adjournment of the general debate. The reason — as representatives may guess — is that there have been some problems with the electrical circuits in the building, which has led to computers and telephones not working. Because of the logistical problems following that breakdown, the General Committee meeting will be postponed. Perhaps representatives will convey that information to their colleagues who are working on the General Committee.

The meeting rose at 7.20 p.m.